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ESSAYS,

PHILOSOPHICAL, HISTORICAL,

AND

LITERARY.

Est quiddam, quod suâ vi nos allicit ad sese, non emolumento captans aliquo, sed trahens suâ dignitate: quod genus virtus, scientia, veritas est.

CICERO.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR C. DILLY, IN THE POULTRY.

MDCCLXXXIX.

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E S S A Y S

PHILOSOPHICAL HISTORICAL

AND

L I T E R A T U R E



L O N D O N

PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON, IN THE STRAND

MDCCLXXXIII

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E R R A T A.

- Page 23, line 29, *for* combination, *read* combinations.
 — 39, — 8, *dele* the whole line.
 — 83, — 17, *for* quickly, *r.* quietly.
 — 98, — 15, — not be, *r.* be not.
 — 178, — 21, — preserved, *r.* erected.
 — 221, — 20, — Selemaque, *r.* Télémaque.
 — 243, — 30, — migh, *r.* might.
 — 250, — 27, — imbibe, *r.* indeed.
 — 255, — 13, — irresistable, *r.* irresistible.
 — 256, — 21, — second, *r.* second.
 — 264, — 5, after education? I cannot, &c.
 — 356, — 16, 29, *for* riginides, *r.* regicides.
 — 364, — 17, *for* hypothesis, *r.* hypotheses.

ESSAYS,
PHILOSOPHICAL, HISTORICAL,

&c. &c. &c.

ESSAY I.

On LIBERTY and NECESSITY.

THE celebrated controversy on the subject of Liberty and Necessity has, from the earliest ages and in various modes, attracted the attention and employed the sagacity of philosophical and speculative minds. Whether the course of human events is fixed and unalterable, or uncertain and contingent, is a question in the highest degree curious and interesting, but at the same time involved in difficulties of such magnitude, that it may be justly doubted whether it is capable of a solution so clear and satisfactory, as to preclude a difference of opinion on this subject, amongst enquirers equally candid, impartial, and intelligent. In modern times, indeed, the controversy has assumed a more regular and scientific form; and

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the utmost force of the human understanding has been exerted, the utmost powers of ratiocination displayed by the advocates on each side, in their attempts to establish or confirm their respective systems : yet the question does not seem to approach to a decision, and the greatest names in the republic of letters are still divided in opinion on this important point. Perhaps it may afford some amusement to those who do not possess leisure or inclination to toil through the numerous volumes to which this controversy has given birth, to view, in a small compass, the principal arguments on each side, expressed in easy and intelligible terms : by which means they will be enabled to form a general idea of the nature of this famous controversy, and be in some degree qualified to form a judgment respecting it. First then, the Necessarian writers (amongst whom Hume, Hobbes, Collins, Liebnitz, Hutcheson, Edwards, Hartley, Priestley, and perhaps Locke, are to be classed), strenuously maintain, that the course of human events is absolutely fixed and unalterable, and that nothing could possibly, or at least without a change in the fundamental laws of the universe, take place, otherwise than as it is, has been, or is to be. This, they affirm, is not merely a probable conclusion, but a conclusion demonstrably resulting from the following considerations:— Whatever begins to exist, must have an adequate cause of its existence; for, if the smallest particle of dust, or the most transient emotion of the mind,

mind, could come into existence without a cause, it is evident that the whole universe, and all the inhabitants it contains, might also exist without a cause: and consequently, it would be impossible to prove the existence of the great and original Cause of all things. This primary truth, then, being established, they assert further, that the same causes in the same circumstances must produce exactly the same effects; this axiom being consonant to all the phenomena of nature, and indeed the basis and foundation of all just philosophy. To affirm that the same causes do not in the same circumstances produce invariably the same effects, is in reality to assert that a cause of existence is not absolutely necessary; for, if nothing in the cause corresponds to the variation in the effect, that variation exists without a cause; consequently this truth is equally incontrovertible with the first: and they proceed with confidence to a third proposition, necessarily resulting from the two former, viz. that a man in any given situation must form certain or definite volitions or determinations; for, if nothing exists without a cause, and the same causes in the same circumstances produce the same effects, the volitions referred to must have had a cause, and the cause which was adequate to the production of those volitions, was inadequate to the production of any other than those; for a variation in the volitions would necessarily imply a variation in the cause. From hence it follows, by easy and

irrefragable deduction, that in every possible situation in which a human or thinking being can be placed, his volitions must be determinate and certain: that the volitions of all mankind are so, and finally, that as every event comes to pass in consequence of causes previously existing, the whole series of events is under the influence of an absolute and uncontrollable Necessity. Again, it is urged as an undeniable matter of fact, by this class of metaphysicians, that no volition ever takes place in the mind without some motive: as this proposition is too plain to be called in question, it must be allowed, that when different motives present themselves to the imagination, the mind will be invariably influenced by the stronger motive; consequently the volition must be in the strictest sense necessary. The prescience of the Divine Being affords also a collateral argument of the greatest weight in support of the doctrine of Necessity; for, if future events are, in their own nature, uncertain and contingent, Omniscience itself cannot see them to be otherwise than they actually are; and it is a gross and palpable contradiction to assert, that God can with absolute certainty foretell that a particular event shall take place; and at the same time to affirm, that the event foretold depends upon the free-will of man for its accomplishment, if the determinations of the will are themselves lawless and uncertain.

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To these very powerful and cogent arguments the advocates for philosophical liberty, viz. Clarke, Beattie, Butler, Price, Law, Bryant, Wollaston, Horsley, &c. reply to the following purpose:—As all mankind have an internal consciousness of freedom, and as it is impossible for any metaphysical subtilties so totally to overpower the original and genuine dictates of nature, as to excite a real belief in the mind of any rational being that he is not master of his own actions, but that he is a mere machine, and as incapable of controlling the events of his life, or the determinations of his will, as a puppet to resist the impulse of the wires by which he is put in motion, it might seem sufficient to appeal to common sense for the refutation of assertions so extravagant and absurd; but in order more completely to expose the fallacy and detect the sophistry of those arguments by which their antagonists attempt to reason men out of their reason, it is proper, say they, to enter into a more full and accurate investigation of them; and with respect to the so much boasted argument from the necessary operation of causes and effects, they profess their readiness to acknowledge the necessity of a cause to the production of any effect, but they can by no means admit the application of this axiom to the support of the hypothesis in question, nor by any means allow that motives are to be considered as the efficient causes of volition: The man alone is the agent, and forms the volition, upon the view and consideration of motives indeed

which may be, and usually are, the occasion of the volition, but which cannot with any degree of propriety be stiled the impellers or the true and physical causes of it. To set this proposition in a clearer light, they observe, that amongst other wonderful and incomprehensible powers with which it has pleased God to endow the human mind, is the faculty of self-determination, of beginning motion, of putting itself in action; and though no reasonable person will exert this power in a total disregard to motives, yet must the power indisputably be allowed to exist independent of the motive; and should two different volitions be supposed to take place in the same precise situation, they cannot surely, with any shadow of justice, be represented as existing without any adequate cause, when the self-determining power is itself the cause of each volition.

In various instances the different motives presented to the mind appear equally forcible: at other times we cannot with the utmost attention perceive our minds to be influenced, previous to the act of chusing, by any motive whatever, to a definite choice. In such cases can any one be so absurd as to imagine that the man is not at liberty to act at all. Has not a man a power of walking, because he is not incited by any particular motive to turn either to the right or to the left? Or is a traveller incapable of proceeding to the place of his destination till he has come to a formal determination whether the shorter and rougher, or the farther

farther and easier road will be more eligible? No; doubtless he has a power of instant determination, notwithstanding the impossibility of ascertaining the preponderance, or even the existence of any motive which could in any manner influence the volition. Even in those cases where the preponderance of any motive is visible and notorious, no man can truly say that the action consequent upon it was, strictly speaking, necessary: for great as the weight of the motive may be supposed, if it was not actually of a violent or compulsive kind, the self-determining power might have decided in opposition to that, or any other motive whatever.—So that the weakness and fallacy of that reasoning must be apparent to every unprejudiced enquirer, by which it is pretended, that the mind will be necessarily and invariably influenced by the strongest motive. In the multifarious and eventful business of life it perpetually happens, that the mind is agitated and perplexed by a conflict of opposite and contending motives; and we too frequently find virtue and reason ranged on one side, passion and inclination on the other. In this unhappy situation what is to be done? Are men quietly and passively to submit to the strong and violent impulse of passion, and refuse to listen to the still and feeble call of reason? No; they must exert their own inherent power of self-determination, and form their resolutions in spite of the superior force of those inclinations which they know to be highly culpable and unworthy. If it is sufficient to say, in

vindication of a vicious action, that the motives which influenced us to the perpetration of it were at the time predominant in the mind, no villainy could ever want an adequate apology; the very foundations of virtue would be subverted, the ideas of virtue and vice would be totally confounded, and the moral character of the Deity himself, as the author of a constitution of things which necessarily and inevitably led to the commission of every species of immorality, would be highly reflected upon, and most injuriously, not to say profanely traduced, and misrepresented. And in regard to the collateral argument deduced from the divine prescience, it may be said, in the language of scripture, that as the heavens are high above the earth, so are God's ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts; and it would be most unreasonable and presumptuous to expect that men should be able to comprehend or explain the mode in which the divine attributes exist or operate. We know by intuition, as well as induction, that the will of man is free; and we know, by the accomplishment of prophecies, as well as by the express claims and declarations of the Divine Being, that all futurity lies open to his immense survey: and these truths, if separately proved, must undoubtedly be consistent with each other, however inconsistent or irreconcilable they may appear to our weak and limited capacities. But even if it should be allowed that the free-will of man, and the fore-knowledge of Deity, when understood in its utmost latitude, are express contra-

contradictions, it would surely be much less derogatory to the honour and glory of Almighty God, to acknowledge that the attribute of prescience is not, absolutely and strictly speaking, without limitation; than to assert the existence of it in such a sense as to imply the impossibility of imparting to man freedom of agency, the glorious and inestimable privilege of self-determination. If it is in the nature of things impossible, that the attribute of prescience can subsist in its fullest extent, without depriving men of that faculty which can alone render them moral or accountable agents, with profound submission and reverence we may venture to affirm, that in this sense, and to this extent, it does not subsist; though doubtless that Almighty Being, to whom all hearts are open and all desires known, cannot fail to judge, with a degree of precision to us wholly incomprehensible, concerning the effects which will arise from causes actually existing. His foresight extends to every possible contingency, and his power and wisdom will infallibly make every event subservient to the most glorious and salutary purposes.

The Necessarians, far from being silenced by these popular and specious reasonings, with great ardour and confidence thus resume the argument:—It is acknowledged, say they, by our opponents, then, that nothing can come into existence without a cause. All the affections, emotions, and feelings of the mind, however modified and however distinguished, are the real and genuine effects of some
real

real and adequate cause. The question therefore to be decided is this, "Whether those mental affections are produced by a regular concatenation of circumstances or motives operating as real and adequate causes, or whether they are the result of a certain faculty of the mind fortunately discovered for this very purpose, and dignified with the appellation of the self-determining power." He who affirms that the self-determining power is the cause of volition, must doubtless intend to convey some farther idea than that the power by which our volitions are determined is the cause of volition; for this is a mere identical proposition, which can never be seriously proposed as the subject of philosophical discussion.—By the self-determining power therefore must be meant, if indeed it has any meaning, either the actual exertion of volition, or the mental energy which precedes volition, and which is the efficient cause of it. If it means the actual exertion of volition, then the assertors of this power evidently confound the cause with the effect, making the act of volition prior to itself, distinct from itself, and the cause of itself. But if it means the mental energy preceding and producing volition, it is then plainly equivalent to the *term motive*, and the question is reduced to a mere verbal controversy; for this mental energy, denoting only a particular disposition and state of mind, must itself have resulted from a previous disposition of mind, as likewise that previous disposition from one yet more remote:—a regular and uninterrupted concatenation of volitions thus

thus extending itself backwards to the original source of agency, each volition or mental state, like wave impelling wave, arising from preceding, and giving rise to succeeding states or definite situations of mind analogous to itself, and corresponding to those immutable laws by which the mental no less than the material world is governed by infinite wisdom and power.—But the *term motive*, according to the Necessarian definition, includes all those previous circumstances which contribute to produce a definite volition or determination of the will.—To what purpose then attempt to distinguish between the power and the motive of determination, when the ideas precisely coincide; the definite cause of a definite volition being all which is really meant by either?—Or where is the difference between the Libertarian, who says that the mind chooses the motive; and the Necessarian, who asserts that the motive determines the mind; if the volition be the necessary result of all the previous circumstances?—The distinction in this case can only amount to an idle and trifling evasion; and it is evident, that in order to preserve a shadow of liberty, its advocates make no scruple to adopt a gross impropriety of expression: to boast, that the mind chooses the motive when the mind is restricted to a definite choice, is ridiculous; and it is in fact as great a solecism, as to affirm that the volition chooses the motive: for the choice of the mind is not prior, but subsequent to the motive; it is therefore not the cause, but the effect of the motive; and this pretended mental choice

choice is manifestly neither more nor less than the necessary determination of volition.

After this, it is needless to enlarge upon the absurdity of the idea, that this pretended power is capable of deciding in contradiction to the most powerful motive; for if it is considered as the real and proper cause of volition, its decisions must be definite and certain; and it is perfectly ridiculous to apply the term most powerful to that motive which is not actually prevalent. For the sake of argument, we have admitted the existence of a power in the mind, the reality of which, as distinguished from the power of motives, it is impossible to establish by even the shadow of a proof; but if it really existed, it is evident it could exist only as the cause of volition in general; for, so far as it is not biased and influenced by motives, so far it bears an exactly equal relation to each particular volition; and therefore cannot possibly be the cause of any specific determination; just as matter endowed with a similar power of self-motion would remain for ever inert, in consequence of its possessing an equal tendency to move in every possible direction at the same instant of time. So far as it is an independent principle, therefore, it is a nugatory and useless one. But even if it could be proved the true and proper cause of every particular volition, still we insist that the volitions produced by it must be certain and definite; for it will ever remain an incontrovertible axiom, notwithstanding all metaphysical refinements and subtleties, that the same
cause

cause in the same precise circumstances must inevitably produce the same effects.—To appeal to the internal feelings and consciousness of mankind, as the advocates for liberty affect to do in confirmation of their principles, will avail them little : the only species of liberty that any man is or can be conscious of, is a liberty or power of voluntary agency, or of acting as he pleases or wills ; and this is a power which we are so far from contesting, that we consider it as an essential part of the Necessarian system. The fact is, that the question so much contested among philosophers, viz. *Whether volitions are definite in definite circumstances*, never occurs to the generality of mankind ; and, if it were stated, would not be understood : To philosophers only, then, let the appeal be made ; and surely every attentive and impartial examiner must be compelled to answer in the affirmative.

As to the immoral and pernicious consequences which our adversaries pretend to deduce from Necessarian principles, it is easy to show, that they are founded in a gross misapprehension of their nature and tendency. The philosophical idea of Liberty will not indeed be included in the Necessarian definition of virtue, but it will still remain as distinct from and opposite to vice, as excellent in itself, and as much the object of love and admiration, as it can possibly be upon any hypothesis whatever. To incite us to the practice of it, and to deter us from the commission of vice, motives must, agreeably to the frame and constitution of the human

human mind, be held out to our view; peace and happiness be annexed to the one, shame and misery to the other; and these associations once implanted in the mind, must produce the most beneficial effects; and the importance of early inculcating just sentiments, and of urging men to the practice of virtue, by every laudable motive, cannot appear in so striking and important a light upon any other ground, as on that which ascribes to them a certain and invariable operation. That objection to the doctrine of Necessity, which charges it with involving the character of the Supreme Being in the guilt of moral turpitude, is an accusation equally weak and ill-founded. If the Deity acts immorally in decreeing vicious actions, how can our adversaries, upon their own principles, vindicate God's moral government, in permitting those irregularities which he could so easily have prevented. The truth is, the difficulty is the very same on each and indeed every hypothesis; and the Necessarians are under no peculiar obligation to solve that great problem, the introduction of evil into the universe: however, as we have the most convincing proofs, derived both from reason and revelation, of the moral attributes of Deity, we may surely rest satisfied that very wise and important ends are to be answered by it; and we may safely conclude, that all things shall finally terminate in pure and perfect happiness; and that the power, wisdom, and goodness of God shall be at length fully displayed, and illustriously

triously vindicated. It is farther observable, that the consequences flowing from the system of Necessity, and which appear to the assertors of free-will so alarming and dreadful, are light and trivial, when compared with those which must necessarily result from the denial of the Divine prescience; which may be said to wrest the sceptre from the hand of the Creator, and to place that capricious and undefinable principle, the self-determining power of man, upon the throne of the universe. If the absolute foreknowledge of God is admitted, every one must see that contingency is excluded; and consequently the whole fabric reared upon the shallow and visionary basis of man's free agency, must instantly dissolve; "and, like an insubstantial pageant faded, leave
"not a wreck behind."

E S S A Y II.

On SHAKESPEARE.

IT appears paradoxical, but it is strictly true, that the faults of Shakespeare, great and numerous as his warmest advocates must allow them to be, afford the most decisive proofs of his excellence. It is an acknowledged fact, that to his works all classes of men, the young and the old, the learned and the ignorant, the clown and the courtier, are indebted for the most exquisite entertainment and delight; and yet, what rule of composition can be named which he has not violated; what species of impropriety, from which he is entirely exempt? How transcendent, then, must be the merit of that writer, how striking the lustre of those beauties, which have power to excite such delightful emotions, under such disadvantages, and combined with such defects? It is a subject of liberal curiosity to enquire into the nature of those beauties, and in what manner they concur, to produce this extraordinary effect. Much has been said and much been done by critics of the first eminence in order to illustrate those points, but I am of opinion that it will ever remain in
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some degree a mystery, why one writer pleases above another, and consequently why Shakespeare pleases above all others. I believe it requires a much more intimate acquaintance with the human mind than the acutest philosopher can boast, to be able to trace the origin and progress of all those associations which contribute to the formation of pleasurable ideas. We know, indeed, from experience, that the observation of certain long established rules of composition pleases in a certain degree; and we can account tolerably, upon philosophical principles, for the pleasure we derive from those sources: but unfortunately for the lovers of system, Shakespeare has dared to please in contradiction to rules, and that in a much higher degree than the most admired writers who have adhered to them. For I think it will be acknowledged, that even the *Œdipus* and *Iphigenia* of Sophocles and Euripides are inferior to *Lear* and *Othello*, in regard to the general effect of the composition; and to put the *Cid* and *Athalie*, those *chef d'œuvres* of the French theatre, in competition with Shakespeare, is, as it were, to bring Paris into the lists to encounter Ajax or Achilles. Without pretending to enter very deeply into the subject, I shall offer a few remarks, such as occur to me, on the causes of this evident and prodigious superiority; or, in other words, I propose to point out some of those characteristic beauties which predominate in the works of Shakespeare, and which appear to me to constitute their principal excellence: and

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perhaps

perhaps the most striking feature appertaining to them is this, "that they strongly arrest the attention."—Our curiosity is powerfully excited at the commencement of each piece, and it is never suffered to subside till the conclusion of it: this is the most infallible test and proof of genius. Many of our modern tragedies, it must be acknowledged, are regular and faultless performances; some of them are not only free from material defects, but possess a considerable share of real excellence; for instance, *Cato*, *Irene*, and *Phædra* and *Hypolit*us. The diction of these plays is lofty and poetical, without being inflated; the sentiments just and noble, the plots regularly conducted, the characters skilfully diversified, and the unities strictly preserved. What can be wanting then to the perfection of tragedy? I know not; but this I know, that these tragedies, and such as these, I read without emotion or sympathy, with a certain sensation of pleasure indeed, but so weak as scarcely to induce me to take up the performance a second time, except it may be for the purpose of committing a few splendid passages to memory. They are defective in that first and greatest power of composition, the power of seizing, fascinating, and enchaining the attention: in a word, they are defective in *genius*, a term equally impossible to mistake or to define. On the contrary, I am still unable to read *Lear*, *Macbeth*, or *Othello*, often as I have perused them, without the strongest emotions; not of admiration, for I have not leisure

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to admire till I have laid down the book—but of pity, terror, indignation, sollicitude, and sorrow ; but is there not a sufficient quantum of distress and misfortune to produce these effects in our modern dramas ? Distresses and misfortunes there are in abundance, certainly ; but so perverse is my disposition, that where the poet is most inclined to be serious, I am often most disposed to be merry. I am as void of compassion as Launce's dog Crab. " I think," says he, " Crab, my dog, be the fourest-natured dog that lives ; my mother weeping, my father wailing, my sister crying, our maid howling, our cat wringing her hands, and all our house in great perplexity, yet did not this cruel-hearted cur shed one tear." But not to dwell any longer on this obscure and general cause of the superiority of Shakespeare above all other dramatic writers, I believe it will be universally allowed, that his skill in discriminating, and his attention to the preservation, of his characters, constitute a distinguished branch of his superior excellence. It is true, that in many other productions of the drama we meet with characters natural and consistent, conceived with judgment, and sustained with propriety : but the characters of Shakespeare are drawn with such surprising force, as well as propriety and truth, that we can scarcely forbear to consider them as originals actually in existence. Many scenes are penned with such an air of animation, of nature, and reality, that one is almost tempted to suppose that the poet had, like Bayes, overheard the dialogue

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which

which he gives us as his own invention. Such is the scene in which Hamlet is first informed of the appearance of his father's ghost; such the garden scene in Romeo and Juliet; and such the scene in which Iago first awakens the jealousy of Othello; and such an hundred others. The characters of Shakespeare, also, are not only drawn with force and correctness, but many of them are of a very uncommon and original cast.—Such as Falstaff, Polonius, Jaques, Menenius, &c. Characters like these require the utmost care and delicacy in the execution, and afford the highest degree of entertainment when touched by the hand of a master: they are not so much close and exact copies of nature, as bold imitations; they are not, perhaps, such characters as do exist, but, when once invented, such as might easily be supposed to exist. We perceive that they are so constructed as to display the most perfect knowledge of the human mind; that the component parts of these characters are strictly consonant to those ideas of truth and nature which we find in our own breasts; but the combination is wholly new. Who will venture to assert, that the character of Falstaff is unnatural; but, if we look into real life, where shall a Falstaff be found? it was to be found in the inexhaustible imagination of Shakespeare only:—though, so exquisite is the workmanship of this “journeyman of nature,” that it would scarcely seem hyperbolical and extravagant to say, with the poet,

“Nature herself, amaz’d, may doubting stand,
“Which is her own, and which the painter’s hand.”

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It is further observable, that in characters of the same class, we find the nicest and most curious shades of discrimination.—The heroines of Corneille are all of a family; but if we survey with attention the characters of Desdemona, of Imogen, of Ophelia, of Juliet, &c. all innocent and amiable, we perceive that each has her peculiar traits, which distinguish her from the rest:—Juliet has not the artlessness and simplicity of Desdemona; Imogen has not the courage and resolution of Juliet; Ophelia has not the tender and delicate affection of Imogen; nor Desdemona the filial piety of Ophelia. Another remarkable circumstance relating to this astonishing preservation of character is, that he is always careful to imitate, and not merely to describe, the feelings and passions of the different personages of the drama: the distinction between imitation and description has been well illustrated by Lord Kaimes; and it is certain, that nothing less than a genuine expression of passion can awaken the attention or sympathy of the spectator. Shakespeare deals very little in loose and unmeaning declamation: in trying and critical situations, we have usually the language of nature bursting from the heart; or if he fails, it is not by falling into the undramatical and uninteresting language of description, but into sentiments too much laboured, harsh or unseasonable metaphors, or quaint and far-fetched conceits. Othello, when perfectly convinced of the falsehood of Desdemona and the

C 3 treachery

treachery of Cassio, thus exclaims, in the most perfect imitation of passion that can be conceived :

Oth. Oh ! that the slave had forty thousand lives ;
One is too poor, too weak for my revenge !
Now do I see 'tis true.——Look here, Iago ;
All my fond love thus do I blow to heaven :
'Tis gone.——

Arise, black Vengeance, from thy hollow cell !
Yield up, O Love, thy crown and hearted throne
To tyrannous Hate ! swell, bosom, with thy fraught,
For 'tis of aspicks tongues !

Iago. Yet be content.

Oth. Oh ! blood, blood, blood.

Iago. Patience, I say ; your mind, perhaps, may
change.

But here the language of imitation changes to
that of description :

Oth. Never, Iago : Like to the Pontick sea,
Whose icy current and compulsive course
Ne'er feels retiring ebb, but keeps due on
To the Propontick, and the Hellespont ;
Even so my bloody thoughts, with violent pace,
Shall ne'er look back, ne'er ebb to humble love,
Till that a capable and wide revenge
Swallow them up.

Beautiful as this comparison is, we feel the
impropriety of it in the situation and circumstances
of the speaker : this is a remarkable deviation from
Shakespeare's usual mode of writing ; but if we look
into modern plays, and into the works of the French
dramatists, we shall find imitation of passion scarcely
attempted, and description every where prevalent.

The next remarkable characteristic of this great
poet which offers itself to notice is, the beauty
and

and energy of his diction. It is now two hundred years since he commenced writer, and in this time his language has acquired a certain obsolete cast, an air of antiquity, which it must be owned is of no advantage to his comedies, for the style of comedy should be always easy and familiar; but which gives to his tragic compositions an inexpressible grace and dignity. This is a species of excellence which modern writers cannot even attempt, without falling into a sort of literary mimicry which is productive of a very ludicrous effect, as the tragedies of Cumberland fully evince. The beautiful concluding lines of Dryden's epistle to Kneller, are as applicable to the art of poetry as to that of painting; and it might have been as truly predicted of the works of a Shakespeare, as of those of a Raffaele.

More cannot be by mortal art exprest,
 But venerable age shall add the rest.
 For Time shall with his ready pencil stand,
 Retouch your figures with his rip'ning hand;
 Mellow your colours, and imbrown the teint;
 Add every grace, which Time alone can grant;
 To future ages shall your fame convey,
 And give more beauties than he takes away.

It cannot however be doubted, but that the style and diction of Shakespeare must have originally possessed merit of the highest kind; the most forcible as well as the most beautiful combination of words which the English language affords, are to be found in his works. Where, in the whole range of modern

modern poetry, do we meet with such powers of expression as the following passages exhibit, which on the casual opening of a volume almost immediately present themselves.

All those which were his fellows but of late,
Some better than his value, on the moment
Follow his strides; his lobbies fill with tendance,
Rain sacrificial whisperings in his ear.

——Who dares, who dares,
In purity of manhood stand upright,
And say, This man's a flatterer? If one be,
So are they all; for every grize of fortune
Is smooth'd by that below: the learned pate
Ducks to the golden fool: all is oblique;—

——Here's gold; go on;—
Be as a planetary plague, when Jove
Will o'er some high-vic'd city hang his poison
In the sick air.

——What! think'st thou
That the bleak air, thy boist'rous chamberlain,
Will put thy shirt on warm? Will these moss'd trees,
That have out-liv'd the eagle, page thy heels;
And skip when thou point'st out? Will the cold
brook,
Candy'd with ice, caudle thy morning taste,
To cure thy o'er-night's surfeit? Call the creatures,
Whose naked natures live in all the spite
Of wreakful heaven; whose bare unhousted trunks,
To the conflicting elements expos'd,
Answer meer nature—bid them flatter thee;
Oh, thou shalt find——

——Oh! dear divorce (*looking on the gold.*)
'Twixt natural son and sire! thou bright defiler
Of Hymen's purest bed! thou valiant Mars!

Thou

Thou ever young, fresh, lov'd, and delicate wooer,
 Whose blush doth thaw the consecrated snow
 That lies on Dian's lap ! thou visible god,
 That folder'ft close impossibilities,
 And mak'st them kifs; that speak'st with every tongue,
 To every purpose ! oh thou touch of hearts,
 Think, thy slave man rebels; and by thy virtue
 Set them into confounding odds, that beasts
 May have the world in empire !—&c. &c.

Timon of Athens.

I cannot dismiss these remarks respecting the beauty of his style, without noticing the astonishing variety and richness of his imagery. He is the most figurative writer, Ossian perhaps excepted, in our language; yet his similes and metaphors are chosen with such exquisite propriety, and so happily adapted to the disposition, situation, and circumstances, of the different speakers, that his style very rarely appears stiff, or laboured, or affected; and if he is ever justly chargeable with those faults, they much oftener arise from violent ellipses and inversions of language, from licentious modes of expression, and words used in anomalous senses, than from the improper or injudicious use of metaphorical ornament. I do not mean however to assert, that throughout the entire extent of his voluminous productions, are not to be found a very considerable number of indefensible images, and even of ridiculous conceits; but I affirm, that they bear a very small proportion to those passages in which the happiest use is made of this liberty; and “*the poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,*” seems to glance

glance from heaven to earth in search of objects, from whence to borrow apt and suitable allusions to grace and dignify his page. His images are indeed taken from a most comprehensive survey of the works of nature and of art, and the knowledge he displays is so various and extensive, that it cannot but raise astonishment, how in the course of a life, the early part of which appears to have been wasted in idleness and dissipation, and the rest devoted to the duties of his profession as an actor, manager, and author, he could find opportunities to amass such inexhaustible stores of mental treasure. The first act of Hamlet alone will furnish a sufficient number of examples, to show the exquisite judgment and taste which Shakespeare exhibits in the choice and application of his metaphors.

—Look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill.

Latr. For Hamlet, and the trifling of his favour,
Hold it a fashion, and a toy in blood;
A violet in the youth of primy nature,
Forward, not permanent; tho' sweet, not lasting,

The charest maid is prodigal enough,
If she unmask her beauty to the moon:
Virtue itself scapes not calumnious strokes;
The canker galls the infants of the spring,
Too oft before their blossoms are disclos'd,
And in the morn and liquid dew of youth
Contagious blastments are most imminent.

Oph. I shall th' effects of this good lesson keep,
As watchmen to my heart: but, good my brother,
Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,

Shew

Shew me the steep and thorny way to heaven ;
 Whilst, like a puffed and careless libertine,
 Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads
 And recks not his own read.

—My fate cries out,
 And makes each petty artery in this body
 As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.

—I find thee apt ;
 And duller should'st thou be than the fat weed
 That roots itself at ease on Lethe's wharf,
 Would'st thou not stir in this.—&c. &c.

The last particular which I shall insist upon, as one of the principal characteristics of this great poet, is the unrivalled skill or rather felicity of his versification ; for, though nothing can appear less the effect of care and study, never did any author so happily express, and in such a variety of instances, that curious correspondence between sense and sound in which its grand excellence consists ; his cadences are sometimes so melodious and grateful to the ear, that they may be compared to the soft and mellifluous breathings of a flute ; and at other times so full and powerful, as to resemble the animating sounds of the trumpet : every passion and affection of the mind assumes that precise tone which is peculiarly suitable to it ; and the accents of grief, rage, love, pity, indignation, and despair, are scarcely to be distinguished with less ease and certainty by the various flow of the numbers, than the precise sense of the passages from the words. If this has the air of hyperbole and extravagance, I can only say, that though the admirers of this
 poet

glance from heaven to earth in search of objects, from whence to borrow apt and suitable allusions to grace and dignify his page. His images are indeed taken from a most comprehensive survey of the works of nature and of art, and the knowledge he displays is so various and extensive, that it cannot but raise astonishment, how in the course of a life, the early part of which appears to have been wasted in idleness and dissipation, and the rest devoted to the duties of his profession as an actor, manager, and author, he could find opportunities to amass such inexhaustible stores of mental treasure. The first act of Hamlet alone will furnish a sufficient number of examples, to show the exquisite judgment and taste which Shakespear exhibits in the choice and application of his metaphors.

—Look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill.

Laer. For Hamlet, and the trifling of his favour,
Hold it a fashion, and a toy in blood;
A violet in the youth of primy nature,
Forward, not permanent; tho' sweet, not lasting.

The charest maid is prodigal enough,
If she unmask her beauty to the moon:
Virtue itself scapes not calumnious strokes:
The canker galls the infants of the spring,
Too oft before their blossoms are disclos'd,
And in the morn and liquid dew of youth
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 poet

poet have perhaps been too forward to defend or extenuate his faults: in speaking of his characteristic excellencies and beauties, I really think it is almost impossible to be guilty of excess in our applause: there appears even something almost supernatural in the genius of this man; something to which the rest of mankind bear neither relation nor resemblance. But it may be proper to subjoin a few specimens of the curious felicity in his versification, which I have been remarking upon, and which may serve at once as illustrations and proofs of what I have advanced. How slow and mournful the movement of the following lines!

Const. What dost thou mean by shaking of thy head?
 Why dost thou look so sadly on my son?
 What means that hand upon that breast of thine?
 Why holds thine eye that lamentable rheum?
 Be these sad sighs confirmers of thy words? &c.

King John.

How striking the transition to the language of fury and revenge!

Arm, arm, ye heavens! against these perjur'd kings!
 ————Hear me, oh, hear me!

Oh, that my tongue were in the thunder's mouth!
 Then with my passion would I shake the world, &c.

Ibid.

One would imagine Shakespeare was describing, in these charming lines, the very effect which they are made to produce.

That strain again; it had a dying fall:
 Oh, it came o'er my ear like the sweet south,

That

That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing, and giving odour.

Twelfth Night.

But in what bold and sounding language are the grand and magnificent ideas expressed, which are conveyed in the following lines :

Ye elves of hills, &c.—by whose aid
(Weak masters though ye be) I have bedimm'd
The noon-tide sun, call'd forth the mutinous winds,
And 'twixt the green sea and the azur'd vault
Set-roaring war : to the dread rattling thunder
Have I given fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak
With his own bolt : the strong bas'd promontory
Have I made shake; and by the spurs pluck'd up
The pine and cedar.

The Tempest.

It seems to me scarcely possible to pronounce the following line and a half in a tone of voice much above a whisper :

Pray you, tread softly, that the blind mole may not
Hear a foot fall.

Ibid.

How gay and pleasing the turn of the verse when Romeo's dreams " presage some joyful news at hand :"

My bosom's lord sits lightly on his throne ;
And, all this day, an unaccustomed spirit
Lifts me above the ground with cheerful thoughts.

How soft and tender the accents of love in this and a thousand other passages :

—Oh hear me breath my love
Before this ancient Sir, who, it should seem,
Hath sometime lov'd. I take thy hand, this hand
As soft as dove's down, and as white as it,

Or

Or Ethiopian's tooth, or the fann'd snow,
That's bolted by the northern blast thrice o'er.

Winters Tale.

But enough of quotations. I might go on to enlarge on the admirable sentiments, and maxims of morality, with which his works abound : it has been truly observed, that a perfect system of ethics might be extracted from them. I might expatiate on the skill with which he conducts and combines the different branches of his fable. I might extol the variety and brilliancy of his wit ; and, perhaps with still greater justice, the depth and solidity of his judgment, displaying itself in the most profound and sagacious reflections, the most accurate and demonstrative reasonings. But I wave insisting upon these topics, because it seems to me, that in these respects, other writers have advanced, if not to an equality, at least much nearer to an equality than they have been able to attain in the points already mentioned, in the first and greatest characteristic of genius, the power of moving the passions and enchaining the attention ; in the faculty of inventing and pourtraying characters, that fundamental excellence of the drama ; in the beauty and energy of style, and diction, and imagery, and in the power of numbers, and felicity and facility of versification.

I am not insensible to the merit of the French writers. In every walk of literature, and particularly in the dramatic, they have, by their ingenious productions, done the highest honour to themselves and to their country. I acknowledge, that had

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we not a Shakespeare to boast, none of our tragic pieces, unless an exception be made in favour of Venice Preserv'd and the Orphan, could justly be put in competition with Cinna, Polyeucte, Athalie, Iphigene, and many other pieces of Corneille and Racine, which might be enumerated; but in my opinion, Corneille and Racine themselves stand at a much greater distance from Shakespeare, than Rowe, or Otway, or Fletcher, from them. For one Shakespeare, I believe, Nature forms many Corneilles; and I should as soon expect to see another Newton in philosophy, as another Shakespeare in dramatic poetry.

Voltaire pretends, indeed, that Lopez de Vega was 200 years ago, in Spain, exactly what Shakespeare was in England. As I have never had an opportunity of perusing any of the performances of that voluminous author, I cannot take upon me to controvert the assertion; but, as Voltaire's *ipse dixit* does not amount to demonstration, I shall beg leave to suspend my belief of it, till good sense and good taste become as prevalent in Spain as they now are in England; and when that period arrives, if Lopez de Vega continues as much the object of admiration as at present, the universal opinion of so learned and enlightened a nation will undoubtedly form the strongest presumption, that his genius was of the highest class, and that his name and works are destined to immortality. This presumption now exists in favour of Shakespeare. I consider him as only entering his career of fame
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and glory; and, to adopt the words of an animated writer, "When the very name of Voltaire, and even the memory of the language in which he has written, shall be no more, the Apalachian mountains, the banks of the Ohio, and the plains of Sciota, shall resound with the accents of this barbarian."

Ben Jonson has been accused of giving a scanty and reluctant tribute of applause to his great rival; but there is in his eulogium one line, one prophetic line, which shows that he perfectly understood, and freely acknowledged, his transcendent merit:

"He was not for an age, but for all time."

And without question he is entitled to a place in the highest rank of that illustrious band—

"Whose honours with encreasing ages grow,
As streams roll down enlarging as they flow;
Nations unborn his mighty name shall sound,
And worlds applaud that must not yet be found."

ESSAY III.

On the Reign and Character of QUEEN ELIZABETH.

IT has lately been much the fashion to speak in very disparaging terms of the person and government of Queen Elizabeth.—This celebrated princess, during a reign of almost half a century, and for a period of a century and half succeeding her death, was the object of universal reverence and admiration; and to this very day her name, to the bulk of the people, carries a kind of magic in the sound; they consider her reign as a kind of golden age, as the halcyon days of perpetual prosperity and felicity; but several persons, eminent for the profundity of their historical researches, have discovered, to the great amazement of those who owe their knowledge to common report and information, that the disposition of that princess was arbitrary and imperious, that the maxims of her government were odious and tyrannical, that her authority was despotic, and that the political constitution of this country in her days bore a remarkable resemblance to that of Turkey at present. This, and much more, has Mr. Hume in particular asserted, in a very high and peremptory tone; and, as a necessary consequence of these

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assertions,

assertions, he has taken much pains to exculpate the two first princes of the house of Stuart, from the various accusations that have been brought against them, of introducing arbitrary and unconstitutional principles of government into their administration. According to the representation of that eloquent historian, those monarchs have been treated, both during their lives and since their deaths, with the highest ingratitude and injustice; and if this representation is just, England must pass for the most whimsical and capricious of all nations; for, without any reasonable or assignable cause, Queen Elizabeth has ever been, and still is, the object of the highest admiration and applause, whilst the unfortunate James and Charles are regarded, the one with contempt, the other with detestation.— But this account cannot give entire satisfaction to those who believe human nature to be constituted on certain fixed and immutable principles, and who are consequently inclined to believe, that opposite effects cannot well proceed from similar causes in similar circumstances.

Certainly Mr. Hume has no reason to expect that we should entertain a very high idea of that philosophy which cannot account for moral appearances upon moral principles, or which satisfies itself with a vague or general solution, without attempting to trace the connection between the supposed causes and their respective effects.— If any one should ask how is it possible to account for the sudden diffusion of christianity in the world,

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what can be easier than to reply, that it can be accounted for only by the credulity of mankind. So if any inquisitive person should desire to be informed of the cause of the opposite impressions, which seem indelibly fixed on the minds of the public, respecting the characters and conduct of these successive Sovereigns, the answer is equally ready,—it is whim, caprice, and fashion. As I have, from my earliest recollection, been accustomed to hold the name and memory of Elizabeth in the utmost esteem and veneration, I cannot now adopt other sentiments, without feeling a reluctance, which, that it may not appear altogether the effect of prejudice, I shall attempt in some degree to account for, and justify, by a general review of the leading features of her political character and administration, contrasted with those of her successors of the house of Stuart.

During the civil contests which so long prevailed between the rival houses of York and Lancaster, the regal authority, irregular as the exertions of it sometimes appear, was subjected to a variety of important and salutary restraints. As the one or the other party prevailed, popular laws were enacted, in order to acquire and preserve the good will of the nation, which the opposite faction, when in power, could not venture to repeal; and in the reign of Edward IV. Lord Fortescue was able to demonstrate, in striking colours, the superiority of the English constitution and government, compared

with those of the surrounding nations *; which indeed was sufficiently manifest from the reign of our English Justinian, Edward I. In the short period that Richard III. held the sceptre, many excellent political regulations were made. And when the battle of Bosworth placed Henry VII. upon the throne, he endeavoured, at least for some years, to recommend himself to the nation, who, were in general much attached to the house of York, by similar means; though it must be confessed that, upon the whole, the authority of the monarch was during this reign considerably augmented, the discretionary jurisdiction of the Court of Star Chamber being much enlarged, and the power of the aristocracy in a great measure broken; and towards the latter end of the reign of his successor, by a remarkable concurrence of causes, the royal prerogative had established itself, to appearance, above all control; but in proportion as those adventitious circumstances

* "Non potest rex Angliæ ad libitum suum leges mutare regni sui. Principatu namque nodum regali, sed et politico ipse suo populo dominatur. Si regali tantum præesset eis, leges regni sui mutare ille posset; tallagia quoque et cætera onera eis imponere, ipsis inconsultis; quale dominium denotant leges civiles cum dicant, "Quod principi placuit legis habet vigorem." Sed longè aliter potest lex politicè imperans genti suæ, quia nec leges ipse sine subditorum assensu mutare poterit, nec subiectum populum retinentem onerare impositionibus peregrinis: quare populus ejus liberè fruatur bonis suis: legibus quas cupit regulatus, nec per regem aut quemvis alium depilatur."

FORTESCUE, DE LEG. ANG.

which

which had occasioned this extraordinary exaltation disappeared, new limits were set to the power of the crown ; and during the minority of Edward VI. the constitution was, in a great measure, restored; and, notwithstanding the violence of religious persecution in the succeeding reign, the parliament gave signal proofs of its attention to the security and preservation of the civil privileges of the nation ; and Queen Elizabeth, at her accession, found herself in possession of a crown, invested indeed with ample and splendid, and in some measure indefinite, powers ; but these powers were to be exercised over subjects possessing privileges of the most important nature : some of them of high antiquity, of the value of which they were perfectly sensible, and which nothing short of the most outrageous violence could deprive them of. It may even be affirmed, that the condition of the lower classes of people was at that time, in many respects, preferable to what it now is.

In the middle of the sixteenth century the feudal system was expiring, villanage was virtually abolished, and all orders of men enjoyed the protection and benefit of the same general system of laws. In those days justices of the peace were not, as at present, a sort of cadies, the objects of dread and terror to the surrounding villages; nor were there game laws, or poor laws, or revenue laws at that time existing, to be made the instruments of tyranny, oppression, or revenge. The liberty and property of the higher ranks were effectually secured by the equitable and simple maxims of the common law, aided by the esta-

blished forms of judicial proceedings, and by many wise and salutary statutes ; and though it was not at that period supposed possible to support the authority of government, without exercising, upon certain occasions, a degree of discretionary power, which in the present advanced state of society would justly excite the highest alarm ; yet, as this interference, comparatively speaking, did not often occur, and only in cases which were supposed more immediately to affect the safety of government, it did not in fact give any great shock to the general system of liberty ; and the arbitrary acts of the council, or the Star Chamber, while a firm confidence in the wisdom and justice of the government prevailed, did not more disturb the public tranquillity, than the eccentric motions of comets interrupt the general order and harmony of the solar system. The itinerant judges, and the courts in Westminster Hall, were the usual and regular channels through which justice and judgment were distributed to the whole kingdom ; and every true and loyal subject, to use the words of the great dramatic bard, could “ in her days eat in safety,”

“ Under his own vine, what he planted, and sing
“ The merry songs of peace to all his neighbours.”

This princess succeeded her sister, the detestable Mary, at a very critical period. The nation was divided between two powerful and implacable religious factions, and moreover involved in a war with France, equally unpopular and unsuccessful ; her title was by many thought questionable. She was destitute of foreign alliances, and even of the support

support of any persons eminently distinguished for authority or influence at home. In this precarious situation, her great dependence was on the fidelity and affection of her people; these she resolved by every means in her power to cultivate; and her success was equal to the highest expectations she could form.—The English nation, with *with* distinguished forms of judicial proceedings, and by many all that ardour and generosity which constitute a distinguished part of their character, repaid her attention and solicitude for their welfare, with an affection and gratitude which knew no bounds; and, in the warmth of mutual confidence, and mutual attachment, it was scarcely perceived that the extensive and undefined powers of the crown were incompatible with the liberty of the subject, or that the necessary security of that liberty loudly called for a diminution or circumscription of that prerogative which they saw exercised so much to the advantage of the public. As the limits of this essay do not allow me to enter into a chronological review of this remarkable reign, in order to preserve some degree of method, I shall mention several particulars, in which the political character and conduct of Elizabeth differ very essentially from those of her immediate successors.

And, first, Nothing can be more evident, throughout the whole course of her reign, than her constant and anxious solicitude that all her political transactions should have the stamp and sanction of national approbation. Her great popularity is sometimes represented as the

effect of artifice. She was possessed, it is said, of the arts of insinuation: she knew how to cajole, how to coax, and to flatter; but can any one believe that, in the course of more than forty years, these arts should not have been detected? It is surely paying an ill compliment to the sagacity of the nation to suppose the contrary; but if at that time a full persuasion of her sincerity prevailed, it is certainly harsh and unjustifiable to stigmatize her laudable endeavours to please with the appellations of deceit and simulation. Not that a degree of art may not, upon some occasions, have been used with success; but if she had not been really desirous and anxious that all her determinations in matters of public import should be approved by her people, and if she had not in a great measure regulated her political conduct by the views and sentiments of the nation at large, it is impossible that all her arts could have availed to produce a general or permanent satisfaction. With what address and caution did she conduct the great business of restoring the protestant religion! What nice attention to the national honour appeared in settling the terms of the treaty with France! for though she well knew that Calais was irretrievably lost, and probably did not even wish for the restitution of it, as it was a favourite object with the nation, she would not, by an absolute cession, give too great a shock to their hopes and their prejudices. When pressed to marriage by the parliament, in what soft and gracious terms did she couch her refusal! "She was already wedded:—England was her husband,

band, and all Englishmen her children." The part she took in the affairs of Scotland was perfectly agreeable to the sentiments of the nation, and, I think, to every principle of sound policy. Notwithstanding that her jealousy was unavoidably awakened by the exorbitant claims so openly advanced by the Queen of Scots, and by her obstinate refusal to ratify the treaty of Edinburgh, she yet shewed her disposition to maintain an amicable correspondence with that princess after her arrival in Scotland; and her succeeding misfortunes were owing, not to the intrigues of Elizabeth, but to her own unexampled indiscretions—I should rather say, her own atrocious criminalities; and her long imprisonment, trial, and execution, were justified by the strongest reasons of state necessity, and by the urgent and unanimous wishes and applications of the whole English nation. The assistance she gave to the United Provinces against Spain, and to Henry the Fourth of France, during the continuance of the league, perfectly coincided with the views and inclinations of her own subjects, and was productive of the most important and beneficial effects. The war with Spain, which was the necessary consequence of these measures, was as popular as it was glorious; and though in one important point she declined gratifying the wishes of the kingdom, by delaying to settle the succession to the crown—and there were indeed political as well as personal reasons of great weight, why a successor should not be appointed; yet she made it sufficiently evident, that her views and intentions
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in that grand point entirely coincided with those of the best and wisest men in the nation, who all turned their eyes to the King of Scotland, as the man destined by Providence to unite in bands of eternal amity and concord two nations, which had for so many ages subsisted in a state of mutual distrust and enmity. But if we pass on to the reign of this monarch and his son, the unfortunate Charles, what a contrast! In what single instance do we find the interests of the people consulted, or their wishes gratified? In the countenance and encouragement given by the court to the catholic religion, at a time when the principles and practices of the puritans became every day more prevalent? In sacrificing the gallant Raleigh, to appease the resentment of Spain? In the desertion of his own children, the King and Queen of Bohemia, under their accumulated distresses? In his tame acquiescence in the horrid affair of Amboyna? or in the mean and servile court he paid to the House of Austria, in his attempts to procure the restoration of the palatinate, and to accomplish that great object of his ambition, the marriage of his son with the Infanta? Did his son and successor Charles discover any greater condescension for the opinions or prejudices of his subjects in espousing a catholic princess, and granting, in consequence of this alliance, additional privileges and immunities to the professors of that religion? In involving the nation in two dangerous wars, to gratify the preposterous vanity and resentment of a worthless favourite? By levying taxes in a time
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of profound peace, by virtue of the regal authority? By a professed intention of governing without parliaments, by violent attempts to suppress puritanism in England; and by still more violent attempts to introduce the most odious innovations of a religious nature in Scotland? But I shall enlarge no further on this point: it is too plain to be denied, that the public measures of Elizabeth were in general agreeable to the sense of the nation, and that she wished and endeavoured they should be so; and it is as plain, that in the succeeding reigns public opinion was wholly disregarded, and that almost all the measures of government were the result of pride, obstinacy, and folly.

But, 2dly, The contrast between that great princess and her successors appears equally striking, if we consider their respective characters in what may be termed a legal point of view, or as sovereigns possessed of a limited authority. Though it must be confessed that the deportment of Queen Elizabeth, notwithstanding her general affability, was, upon some occasions, sufficiently imperious; it does not appear that she ever had an idea of advancing such exorbitant principles and pretensions as James the First perpetually insisted upon, in his reasonings and speculations upon government; and which Charles, fatally for himself, attempted to reduce to practice. Mr. Hume asserts, that the only business of parliament in this reign was to grant subsidies: "They pretended indeed," says he, "to the right of enacting laws." Pretended! and did they not exercise this right?

If

If Mr. Hume had taken the trouble to consult the Statute Book, he would have known that very many important and salutary laws were enacted in this reign. The parliament did not, indeed, assume a power of controlling the crown in *matters of state*, as they were called, or, in other words, of directing her transactions with foreign powers; and the Queen's conduct in this respect gave such entire satisfaction to the public, that they were under little or no temptation to interfere; but they usually confined themselves to the less splendid, but more useful, employment of superintending the domestic concerns of the nation; and it is observable, that, to this day, parliament possesses no authority, properly speaking, respecting foreign affairs; though the extensive powers vested in that body, and the utter inability of the crown to support itself without assistance, give it the highest degree of influence, whenever it judges interference necessary. Mr. Hume pleases to assert, that England had less reason to boast of her liberties in the reign of Elizabeth, than the generality of foreign nations at present; but let us suppose for a moment, that the authority of the general assembly of estates in France were restored; that all traces of vassalage were abolished; that trials by jury were introduced; that in the regular courts of judicature nothing were regarded as law, but what had been expressly assented to, and enacted by the representatives of the people; and, that individuals of every rank in public stations were divested of all discretionary powers, and obliged to conform

conform their conduct to the standard of the laws; that the formidable standing army of that kingdom were annihilated, and taxes levied only by the authority of the estates of the realm. Would any man in his senses take upon him to say—notwithstanding that the authority which remained to the crown might be in a great degree indefinite; notwithstanding the existence of irregular courts, which might be empowered to take cognizance of extraordinary cases; notwithstanding that the sovereign might, sometimes, use very lofty and imperious language to the legislative body, and even dare occasionally to violate what, by the enlightened jealousy of our times, would be styled their most essential rights and privileges: Would any man, I ask, venture to affirm, that liberty had not made very great advances in that kingdom? Could it be denied, that in fact they were in possession of a free constitution?—that, if they were sensible of the inestimable advantages they enjoyed, a regular system of liberty might easily be established on such a basis? If, indeed, the government of a country, in such circumstances, was conducted with address and ability; if the public interests were upon the whole understood and pursued; if the extraordinary and irregular exertions of prerogative were such as the necessity of the state seemed to justify; if a due regard was paid to public opinion, and a just reverence maintained for the authority of the laws, in the common and ordinary course of proceedings; the general satisfaction

faction and popularity attending such a government, must naturally preclude any vigorous attempts to improve the constitution, or establish the principles of liberty, on a more secure or extensive foundation. These speculative ideas nearly correspond, I think, with the real state of things in the times of Elizabeth; but if the sceptre should, in similar circumstances, devolve to weak or obstinate princes, who held public opinion in contempt, who pursued measures incompatible with the public interests, who had the imprudence, upon every occasion, to advance speculative principles utterly subversive of every degree of civil or political freedom; who insisted, that the privileges of the subjects were derived merely from the grace and favour of their sovereign, and the power of the prince from God alone; and especially if these slavish principles were reduced to practice; if they were converted into fundamental maxims of government; if there were evident marks of a regular and concerted plan for the extinction of popular privileges, and for reducing the nation to the most abject state of submission to the will of the monarch; if no other reason than "such is our pleasure," was assigned for the most irregular and violent exertions of power; a nation must be destitute of every spark of public virtue, and public spirit, and even deaf to the dictates of common sense, who did not, in consequence of such alarming inroads upon the constitution, take occasion to scrutinize with more accuracy into the nature

nature and foundation of human authority; who did not make use of the advantages they possessed, to circumscribe within narrower limits, and to ascertain by more exact boundaries, those powers, and that prerogative, which had excited such just and general apprehensions.—This representation I take to be perfectly applicable to the state of affairs in the reigns of James and Charles.

Mr. Hume expresses his surprise, that so different a fate should attend the memories of Henry VIII. and Charles I.; but I confess I see nothing very extraordinary or singular in the case. Henry VIII. was undoubtedly a tyrant, but he was at the same time possessed of qualities which will always command a certain degree of respect; and it must be considered, that though a variety of causes then concurred to disturb the balance of the constitution, and to throw a prodigious weight of power into the scale of the crown, yet the parliament was usually made, even in that reign, the instrument of regal tyranny; by which means he not only gave dignity and efficacy to his measures, but escaped a great share of the popular odium which would otherwise have attended him. Let it be considered too, that Henry never went the lengths in the delicate and dangerous business of taxation which Charles ventured to do; not to mention that, in the long period of a century, very essential alterations in a political system may reasonably be supposed to take place; and it is as preposterous to attempt to justify or palliate the arbitrary conduct

conduct of Charles I. by appealing to precedents drawn from the reign of Henry VIII. as it would be to vindicate any illegal or unconstitutional practice of the present reign, by an appeal to the direful precedents of the latter days of Charles the Second.—In the beginning of the seventeenth century, the maxims of the reign of Henry VIII. were become obsolete. Men were accustomed to another mode of government; their minds were occupied by the recollection of the glorious and prosperous times of Elizabeth, when uninterrupted affection and harmony subsisted between the sovereign and the people; and if the prerogative was exerted occasionally in an irregular and arbitrary manner, those very exertions were seen, or were thought at least, to be necessary, and no apprehensions were entertained that they were the result of a fixed and preconcerted plan to enslave the nation. Charles I. was a tyrant as well as Henry VIII. but he attempted the part at a period far more unfavourable to the success of his designs. Mr. Hume pretends, that the circumstances in which he was placed were in the highest degree critical; and plausibly apologizes for him, by saying, that his capacity was not equal to situations of such extreme delicacy: but I cannot conceive that his situation at the commencement of his reign was to be compared in point of difficulty with that of Elizabeth. In the progress of it, indeed, it must be confessed, that he frequently involved himself by his own imprudence, or rather infatuation,

infatuation, in circumstances of such extreme difficulty, that had he even possessed the capacity of Elizabeth, he could not have extricated himself with honour. But I cannot perceive that it required more than a common share of common sense to see, that the temper of the times would not bear even those stretches of prerogative, which were thought necessary, or excusable at least, in the days of Elizabeth; much less any wanton or novel exertions of power; and least of all would it bear an open and almost avowed design to reduce the nation to a state of such abject and unreserved submission, that, if it had succeeded, Mr. Hume might indeed have had reason sufficient for his assertion, respecting the resemblance of the English government to that of Turkey.

It is impossible, in an historical sketch of this kind, to descend to particulars, else it would be easy to illustrate these general observations, by a variety of instances. I cannot, however, forbear to mention a few plain facts, which may be confidently opposed to the specious colourings, and declamation of that celebrated writer. It is not uncommon even for persons of candour and understanding, not very deeply versed in English history, when they read such authors as Mr. Hume, hastily to conclude, that the fame and reputation of Queen Elizabeth are built on a false and visionary basis. They see with amazement, that, in numerous instances, she is justly chargeable with what would now be styled gross and palpable
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violations of the most sacred principles of the constitution. They forget that the question is not whether she acted agreeably to those enlarged ideas of political liberty which now prevail; but whether she regulated her conduct by the temper and spirit of the times in which she lived; and whether she violated any of those principles which were in that age held sacred. On the other hand, it must, without doubt, surprise those who conceive of Queen Elizabeth, as a princess possessed of despotic authority, which is the idea Mr. Hume labours to inculcate, to be made acquainted with many circumstances of her conduct and management in the course of her reign.

In the very commencement of it, the odious and sanguinary instruments of her sister's cruelties escaped with impunity; because they had acted under the sanction of the law. So mild were the maxims of the government at this period, that the detestable and inhuman Bonner himself could venture to appear in public, and even at court, with perfect security. The Queen indeed, it is remarked, averted her eyes, no doubt with horror, from that man of blood; but no other mark of disgrace or resentment followed. Bishop Burnet informs us, that Cecil and the other counsellors of Elizabeth were unanimously of opinion, that no steps should be taken by the Queen's highness, to restore the Protestant religion, till a parliament could be summoned; and we accordingly find, that nothing of consequence was done, in that im-
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portant business, without the sanction of legislative authority. In the ensuing parliament, the affair of the succession, which had been slightly touched on by the preceding one, was resumed with great warmth, and the Queen was reduced to a very disagreeable dilemma. The right of blood clearly rested in the house of Stuart; but the will of Henry VIII. the validity of which, though founded on an act of parliament was however the subject of much dispute, was express in favour of the house of Suffolk. An authoritative and ultimate decision in favour of either must be attended with obvious inconveniences to the reigning sovereign.

To prevent the House from urging the matter any farther, she was obliged contrary probably to her real intentions, as well as her former declarations, to give them some hopes, and intimations, that she entertained views of entering into the marriage state. With these hopes they appeared in a great degree satisfied; but time proving them to be fallacious, in a few years they renewed their application for a settlement of the crown, with greater vehemence than ever. The Queen on this occasion, was so far provoked, as to prohibit the House from proceeding any farther in this matter: however, as little regard was paid to her orders, however peremptory, she thought proper, by another message, graciously to revoke them, and to allow the House liberty of debate. She again intimated her intentions of speedy marriage; but, finding this artifice did not make much impression,

she plainly declared her apprehensions, that the appointment of a successor would be attended with great danger to her person ; that she knew, by her own experience during the reign of her sister, how much court was usually paid to the next heir, and what dangerous sacrifices men were disposed to make of their present duty to their future prospects ; and that she was, therefore, determined to delay, till a more proper opportunity, the decision of this important question.—The House, finding the extreme reluctance of the Queen to comply with their wishes, thought proper to drop the prosecution of this subject for the present ; and the Queen, on dissolving the parliament, reiterated her protestations of regard for the welfare and safety of her subjects, and disclaimed the most distant intention of encroaching on their rights and liberties ; but, still fearing that her conduct might leave injurious impressions, she voluntarily remitted a considerable part of the subsidy voted by parliament ; declaring, that, as she had no immediate occasion for the money, she was as well satisfied it should remain in her subjects pockets as in her own Exchequer.

In the year 1571 another parliament was summoned ; and the principles of the Puritans having made great progress in the intervening years, attempts were made in the House of Commons to procure some further reformation in religion ; but the superintendency of ecclesiastical affairs
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being vested in the crown by the act of supremacy, the Queen took offence at these proceedings; and went so far as to restrain, by an order of council, a member named Strickland, who had the presumption to move the obnoxious bill in question, from giving his attendance in parliament. The Commons immediately took fire at this unusual stretch of power; and it was boldly and unreservedly declared, that the Members of that House were amenable for their conduct, in that capacity, to no other jurisdiction; that, though the prerogative of the Crown ought not to be violated, yet was that prerogative limited by law; and that as the Sovereign could not make laws, so neither was he entitled to break them, of his own authority. The court party, by moving an adjournment, prevented the House from passing any violent resolutions upon this occasion; and the next day the Queen had the good sense and moderation to send her royal permission to Strickland to attend his duty in parliament. Upon a question respecting monopolies, the power of granting which at that time constituted a dangerous branch of the prerogative, Sir Humphrey Gilbert advised the House to beware, lest, if they meddled farther with these matters, the Queen might look to her own power; and, finding herself able to suppress their challenged liberty, and to exert an arbitrary authority, might imitate the example of Lewis XI. of France, who, he observed, had delivered that crown from wardship; a plain indication, surely, that a fundamental

difference at this time existed, and was perceived to exist, between the two monarchies of France and England.

In the year succeeding the defeat of the Armada, a parliament being held, some regulations were proposed respecting the abuses of purveyance, and certain alterations moved in the practice of the court of Exchequer; upon which a kind of amicable dispute ensued between the Queen and the Commons. Lord Burleigh, in her name, insisted that these were matters which touched the prerogative; and, that the Queen had ample authority to rectify grievances of this nature, if applied to by way of petition; upon which the House appointed a committee to attend the Queen, and assure her, that their conduct did not proceed from want of duty or respect. The Queen received them with the most gracious condescension; and, in her turn, assured her loving subjects, that she had already given orders for an enquiry into the abuses attending purveyance, but that the progress of it was retarded by the dangers of the Spanish invasion: that, with the advice of her council and judges, she would redress every grievance which had crept into the administration of the courts of justice; but could not admit, that the House of Commons, by laws moved without her privity, should deprive her of the honour attending these regulations.

In the next parliament application was again made to the Crown, by way of petition, against monopolies; which, indeed, appear to have been sufficiently

sufficiently oppressive:—but the Queen replied, that with regard to these patents, she hoped her dutiful and loving subjects would not take away her prerogative, which was the chief flower in her garden, and the principal and head pearl in her crown and diadem; but that they would rather leave these matters to her disposal. This soft, but evasive answer, so mollified the untoward and uncourtly disposition of the House, that nothing farther was attempted, till the next parliament, which met in the year 1601, and which was the last parliament summoned in this reign. By this time, the abuses of which such repeated complaints had been made, and which it was expected that the Queen would have redressed by virtue of her prerogative, had arisen to an enormous height; and a bill was immediately introduced, for the purpose of abolishing monopolies:—this measure was vehemently opposed by the court party, on the old ground, that this matter regarded the prerogative; and that the Queen ought to be applied to, in the way of petition; and some very extravagant things were advanced on this occasion, respecting the extent of the regal authority, particularly by Sir Francis Bacon, and other court lawyers, which were properly animadverted upon by several of the independent members; and when Serjeant Heyne had the assurance to assert, that the Queen had the same right to the lands and goods of the subject as to any revenue of her crown, the House hemmed and laughed, and would not suffer him to

proceed in his speech.—Upon the whole, it evidently appeared to be the unanimous resolution of the House, notwithstanding these courtly arguments and harangues, that some effectual method should now be taken to put a final period to these intolerable oppressions: it was urged, that petition after petition had been presented to no purpose, and that nothing less than an act of parliament was adequate to the correction of these abuses:—but the excellent understanding and never-failing political sagacity of the Queen once more saved her from disgrace; for, before the bill had passed the Commons, she sent for the Speaker, and commanded him to acquaint the House, that she would immediately cancel these obnoxious patents. The House, who, no doubt, entertained a high and just sense of the Queen's general character and personal merits, and did not without reluctance proceed thus far in their opposition, immediately in a formal address, returned their most grateful acknowledgments for this extraordinary instance of her Majesty's goodness and condescension; and the Queen, in reply, made new professions of tenderness, regard, and attachment to her beloved people. Thus was this critical affair, which the evil genius of a Stuart would quickly have fomented to a serious quarrel, happily terminated; and the Queen had the satisfaction of parting with her people in parliament, for the last time, with all that mutual warmth, and ardour of attachment, which distinguished the auspicious commencement of
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of her reign more than forty years before.—The Queen died in March following, more admired, beloved, and regretted, than perhaps any Sovereign whose name is recorded in history.

Certainly, it must be acknowledged, to the immortal honour of the female sex, that not one of her predecessors, at least since the days of Alfred, can be placed in any degree of competition with this great princess in a political view, whether we consider the popularity, the wisdom, or the success of her administration. If an exception can be made in favour of any one of our antient monarchs, I should be inclined to fix upon Edward I. who distinguished himself by the same enlarged and rational views of policy, by the same indulgent regard for his people, by the same moderation and equity in the internal government of his kingdom, and, it may be added, by the same uninterrupted flow of prosperity and success: in this only they differ, that in the prosecution of the different objects of their ambition, Edward I. shewed but little regard, or rather shewed a total disregard, to every principle of rectitude and justice; while the means employed by Elizabeth to effect her purposes, were, generally speaking, not less innocent, and even laudable, than the ends she had in view were great and important. As to Edward III. and Henry V. those heroes of the mob, they appear to me little better than political Quixotes; the pretensions of these princes to the crown of France were utterly ill founded, and even ridiculous;
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the expectation of final success in their attempts was highly extravagant, and the accomplishment of their grand object extremely pernicious, could it for a moment be supposed attainable. The limits of this Essay allow me to touch but very cursorily upon the succeeding reigns; certain indications appeared, very early after the accession of the Scottish monarch, that new maxims of government were adopted, and new measures of obedience were to be exacted. In the very first parliament summoned by James, he scrupled not to assert that he was an absolute king, and that all their privileges were derived from his grant. His extravagant, and even preposterous ideas of the nature of the kingly office and authority, displayed themselves by his supposing, that at his accession peace was *ipso facto* restored between the English and Spanish monarchies, merely because amity subsisted between himself and the king of Spain previous to that event. The same absurdity of intellect, operating upon the same loftiness of disposition, led him to confound the union of the two British crowns, with an union of the two nations; for he maintained, that his subjects born in either kingdom after his accession, were of consequence naturalized in both. He openly asserted it to be sedition in subjects to dispute what a king may do in the height of his power.

Soon after the death of the Earl of Salisbury, A. D. 1613, a parliament was summoned; and the

the loss of that able minister quickly appeared in the rash and precipitate conduct of the king, who dissolved the parliament in great wrath, after a very short session, before the business of a supply was entered upon, on account of the apparent disposition of the House of Commons to restrain certain abuses of the prerogative. After which he continued to govern for some years without parliaments; when, being reduced by his imprudent prodigality to extreme distress, he was constrained to call one in 1621; and though a tolerably good understanding seemed for a time to prevail between the king and the Commons, some grievances being redressed on the one part, and some subsidies voted on the other, a violent rupture soon ensued, in consequence of a remonstrance which the House had the boldness to present to the king, respecting the business of the palatinate, and the negotiation now carrying on for the marriage of the Prince of Wales with the Infanta. The king's pusillanimity, with regard to the first, had not excited less anger and resentment at home, than derision and contempt abroad; and the puritanical spirit was now so universally diffused, that the latter was viewed by the whole nation with horror and detestation.—The indignation of James at this unexpected and unwelcome interference knew no bounds; he reprimanded the House with great vehemence and acrimony, for presuming to debate of things so far above their reach and capacity; he absolutely forbade them from meddling with these deep matters
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of state, and contemptuously applied to them the vulgar proverb, "*Ne futor ultra crepidam.*" He condescended, however, to assure them, that though their privileges were derived from the grace and permission of the sovereign, yet, as long as they contained themselves within the limits of their duty, he should maintain them inviolate. The Commons, thrown, as might be expected, into a flame at this treatment, immediately voted, that the liberties, franchises, privileges, and immunities of parliament, are the ancient and undoubted birthright and inheritance of the subjects of England. - The king, on receiving this information, sent for the journals of the Commons, and with his own hand tore out this resolution of the House; and, not chusing to venture another meeting after this outrage, he immediately dissolved the parliament; after which several of the most popular members were committed to prison, and a proclamation was issued, absolutely prohibiting all discourse concerning these extraordinary proceedings.

Two years after this, however, the Spanish alliance being now abandoned, the king, pressed by his necessities, and influenced by Buckingham, who had a war with Spain in contemplation, once more issued a summons for a new parliament: in his speech at the opening of the session, he so far descended from his former height of loftiness, and even from that dignified reserve which should always accompany the regal character, as to state to the House his causes of complaint against the Spanish court, and

and to ask their advice respecting the disposal of his son in marriage; that identical point which he had forbid the last parliament, in the most peremptory manner, to presume to make the subject of their deliberations: he also voluntarily offered, that the money voted for the purpose of carrying on the proposed war with Spain should be paid to a committee of parliament, and entrusted entirely to their direction and management; a most imprudent concession; and even contrary to the first principles of the English constitution. He had now sufficiently shewn his weakness and timidity; he had demonstrated himself to be "infirm of purpose;" and it required but little sagacity to see the great augmentation of authority and influence which must accrue to parliament from such conduct: and no man of common discernment could imagine, that the Commons would be induced to relinquish the decisive advantage they had gained, by a recurrence to that haughty and contemptuous mode of treatment, over which they had so recently triumphed: in this state of things the king died, and the sceptre devolved to his son Charles; but the history of this reign is too copious and interesting for me to enter upon. Suffice it to say, what the slightest knowledge of the memorable events of it will evince, that the arbitrary maxims and speculations of the father were by the son, fatally for himself, reduced to practice, and visibly pervaded every department of the government. Mr. Hume himself is compelled to

to acknowledge, that, in numerous instances, the laws of the land were openly and notoriously violated; "liberty was totally subverted, and an arbitrary and despotic authority exercised over the kingdom." Upon what grounds, then, can this able and eloquent apologist undertake to vindicate or extenuate the enormity of such a conduct? Why, he pretends truly, "that the grievances which "were so much the subject of complaint, when "considered in themselves without regard to the "constitution, scarcely deserve the name; nor "were they either burdensome on the people's properties, or anywise shocking to the natural humanity of mankind." Indeed! I know not what degree of barbarity and oppression might be necessary to shock the humanity of Mr. Hume: but I believe there are few persons so destitute of humanity, as not to be shocked at the recital of those facts, which he himself has given us in the chapter immediately preceding this very curious and profound observation. Nor can I easily comprehend how it should happen, that the illegal impositions and extortions of Charles were not burdensome on the people's properties;—but, waving these considerations, I will beg leave to ask, how it is possible to reconcile this assertion with the representations which he has uniformly made of the abject and deplorable situation of this kingdom, under the government of Elizabeth. It certainly cannot be doubted, but that Elizabeth acted conformably to the prevailing ideas of her own times; or, in
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other words, she is not chargeable with a violation of the forms of the constitution, as it then subsisted. I think also it will be universally admitted, that the actual grievances of her reign were not more intolerable than those suffered under Charles; but it seems the grievances of Charles's reign scarcely deserve the name. Then I ask, Wherein consists the culpability of Elizabeth? or, What foundation is there for those severe animadversions upon the arbitrary, the imperious, the tyrannical disposition and conduct of that princess? or, In what respect are we of the present generation, in a more eligible situation, or in happier circumstances, than the abject and slavish race that existed two hundred years ago? These things appear to me rather paradoxical; and I think it would require all the ingenuity of Mr. Hume to reconcile them to each other, and to frame out of them one general consistent hypothesis. The truth is, his eager desire of apologizing for the misconduct of the princes of the house of Stuart, has unfortunately made him take such indefatigable pains to cast a shade over the character of Elizabeth, and to brighten the dark traits of the succeeding reigns, that when he attempts to trace the connection of events, and to account for the uninterrupted harmony and felicity subsisting under the administration of the one, and the universal odium and perpetual discord attached to that of the others, he has precluded himself from displaying, in their proper colours, those causes which had
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the principal influence in producing those remarkable effects which he cannot but admit, and for which, upon the ground he has thought proper to occupy, it is absolutely impossible to account. The erroneous representation he has exhibited of this period of our history, I look upon as the fundamental fault of a work, every page of which presents us with new beauties. The fact is, that the grievances sustained by the subjects under the reign of Elizabeth, as well as her successors, were very far from being trifling or imaginary; but a most striking difference may be discovered in this respect, that the severities of the Queen's reign, justly as they would now be reprobated, were at that time considered as the effect of a strong and real political necessity. Or at most, if the Queen was chargeable with some abuses of prerogative, she had the sense and prudence to avoid all positive violations of established privileges; and as the great body of the people were never alarmed with apprehensions of designs inimical to the public happiness, the whispers of individuals were lost amidst the loud acclamations attending her prosperous and popular administration. But with respect to Charles, the whole tenor of his conduct evinced, that the great spring of all his actions, was an eager and intemperate desire to emancipate himself from every species of control, and he ventured to pursue his dangerous projects even while labouring under an universal odium, and at a time when the weak and arbitrary conduct of his father

father had occasioned the principles of government to be more canvassed and much better understood, and all ranks of people were making daily accessions of power and consequence, as well as knowledge, and actually went far greater lengths in opposition to the established laws than Elizabeth, or even than Henry VIII. himself had ever done in the most elevated state of his authority!—Surely, then, we may cease to wonder at the tragical events which succeeded. However, I am happy to do this monarch the justice to acknowledge, that he had, previous to the commencement of the civil war, made every concession that could reasonably be desired; nay, it may be justly affirmed, that in giving his assent to the perpetuity act, he not only annihilated his own power, but subverted the constitution; and from that fatal æra, the house of Commons demonstrated, by almost every measure they adopted, that they had an interest of their own, separate from, and very often contrary to, the general interests of the people they were chosen to represent.

There is yet another point of view, in which Elizabeth may, with great advantage, be set in competition with her immediate successors; and that is, 3dly, Her personal character and disposition. Her extreme affability, and gracious deportment, which she never suffered to degenerate, like her successor James, to a low and gross familiarity, were highly acceptable to the people; and, no doubt, formed one great source of her

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unbounded popularity.—It is remarkable, that Charles II. that “Monster of a King,” as Pope stiles him, is still regarded in a very favourable light by the generality of people, from the strong impression which his fascinating manners, the charms of his address and conversation, originally made on the minds of the public. The total want of dignity and decorum in James, and the frozen formality, and more than Spanish stateliness, of Charles, occasioned extreme disgust, and exposed them to real inconvenience; but if we contemplate the generosity and magnanimity of Elizabeth, the superiority of her character will, I think, be still more apparent. To mention a few instances: In the reign of her sister Mary she had been committed to the custody of Sir Henry Bedingsfield, who treated her with extreme harshness and severity: but the only revenge taken by the Queen, after her accession to the crown, was, to give him, in her usual discourse, the appellation of her gaoler: emulating in this instance the noble pride of Lewis XII. who on a similar occasion, thought it beneath the dignity of a King of France, to revenge the quarrels of a Duke of Orleans. Notwithstanding the regret with which the English nation saw Calais fall into the hands of the French, the Queen positively refused to listen to the insidious overtures of the French court, who offered immediate restitution, if she would recall her troops, and desist from all further interference in the affairs of Scotland. Without hesitation, she firmly replied, that she would not sacrifice the interests

interests of her kingdom, for the sake of a paltry fishing town.

Though it must be acknowledged, that she was by no means exempt from the foibles of her sex, as the curious anecdotes preserved by Melville and other writers fully evince; and though amongst her courtiers there were some whom she distinguished with peculiar marks of her favour; yet the disgraceful recall of Leicester from the Netherlands, and the fatal catastrophe of Essex, plainly prove, how much the Queen predominated over the woman: but the blind partiality of her successors James and Charles for their minions Somers and Buckingham, was as pernicious as it was ridiculous. When offered, nay solicited to accept, the sovereignty of the United Provinces, she had the greatness of mind to reject the proposal, satisfied with the glory of being their protectress and friend. The treaty of marriage with the Duke of Anjou gave occasion to a most manly and spirited letter to the Queen, from Sir P. Sydney, stating, in very strong terms, the insuperable objections to that alliance, which even in our times would be thought a very uncommon liberty; but this she took in good part; and the negotiation was soon after entirely broken off.— But it is still more worthy of remark, that during the time this treaty was depending, the Queen being one day in her barge on the Thames, with Simier the French agent, and others of her court, a shot was fired by a man standing upon the opposite shore,

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which passed very near the Queen, and wounded one of the bargemen. After a strict examination, no proof of treasonable intention appearing, the Queen ordered him to be set at liberty, declaring, that she never would give credit to an accusation against any one of her subjects, which a mother would not believe of her own children. If no other memorial than this was left us of Queen Elizabeth, methinks, this alone would be sufficient to immortalize and embalm her memory. What resolution and spirit did she exhibit, when the whole nation was in alarm at the prospect of a Spanish invasion! With all the heroism of a Boadicea, she put herself at the head of her army, professing her firm purpose to lead them herself into the field, and rather to perish in battle than survive the ruin and slavery of her people. "Let tyrants fear," said she; I have always so behaved myself, that, under God, I have placed my chiefest strength and safeguard in the loyal hearts and goodwill of my subjects. I know I am but a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart of a King, and of a King of England too; and think foul scorn, that Parma or Spain, or any prince in Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realms." By the way, it may be remarked, here is a pretty clear intimation of the superiority of England to the surrounding nations; a superiority arising, no doubt, from the peculiar privileges and immunities which had been transmitted down from their ancestors, and of which their
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free form of government would not suffer them to be deprived.

Upon the discovery of that conspiracy in which the Queen of Scots was so deeply concerned, and for which she justly paid the forfeit of her life, many letters from different English noblemen were found in her cabinet, containing strong professions of their attachment to that princess. Of these the Queen would take no notice, and by this generous policy converted many of her secret enemies into real friends. Lord Chancellor Bacon relates, that certain instructions being transmitted to the English Resident at Paris, the Secretary of State had inserted a clause, that the Ambassador, in order to ingratiate himself with the Queen mother the famous Catharine of Medicis, should take occasion to say, that these two princesses, the Queens of England and France, for experience and skill in the arts of government, were equal to the greatest monarchs; but Elizabeth, indignant at this comparison, immediately ordered the direction to be erased, saying that she had used quite different arts and methods of government.

I have always regarded the liberty which Shakespeare ventured to take with the character of Henry the VIII. in the lifetime of his daughter, as a striking proof of the mild and moderate, or rather the magnanimous, spirit of her government: it is such a liberty as certainly would not now be allowed, whatever advances may have been made in the general system of liberty in this country. To add no more,

she gave a signal instance how much she rose superior to the fears and jealousies incident to weak minds, in the proposal she made to the States of Scotland, to educate the young King at her own cost and at her own court, no doubt, as presumptive heir to the Crown. A remarkable contrast to the conduct of Queen Anne, who, in circumstances nearly similar, could never endure the idea of seeing her successor, whose residence in England would, as she declared, keep the image of her coffin perpetually before her eyes.

It would be an endless and invidious task, to adduce particular instances of the folly, weakness, meanness, and pride, of the Scottish line of monarchs; if any one is disposed to vindicate them from these imputations, let him produce instances of their wisdom, generosity, and magnanimity; for my part, I know of none. The Kings of the House of Stuart seem to have been utterly incapable of that elevation of mind which cast so great a splendour over the character of their illustrious predecessor. The behaviour of Charles I. at his trial and execution may be thought an exception, and he certainly, upon that occasion, exhibited remarkable proofs of firmness and calm resignation; so did the unfortunate Mary, his grandmother, at Fotheringay Castle; so did his descendant James, at the Abbey of La Trappe: but these are not instances of that mental dignity of which I am now speaking, but of a certain natural courage, and inherent fortitude, which the manifold difficulties

difficulties and distresses in which that infatuated family have been involved, have given them frequent opportunities of demonstrating that they are by no means destitute of.

There are two observations which I think it proper to make before I conclude, in order to render complete justice to the character of Elizabeth. The first is, that there is no real foundation for the charge of avarice, so often urged by the enemies of Elizabeth, and so injurious to her reputation. To this charge it may be replied, that in the reign of Elizabeth the revenues of the crown were extremely circumscribed, and parliament was not then in the habit of giving away millions in a breath; her oeconomy was the pillar which supported her authority and independency. Nevertheless, it is allowed that she lived in a stile of great magnificence, far superior, certainly, to what the wretched appearance of the British court in our days can afford us any idea of. She cleared the crown, in a few years, of the heavy debts contracted by her father, brother, and sister; she remitted great sums, at different times, to Scotland, to Holland, and to France: the debt due from Holland alone amounted at her death, to no less than 800,000*l.* for which she generously agreed to take no interest.—The money advanced to Henry IV. she could never recover, being lent without adequate security; though that monarch, in a few years after the peace of Vervins, had amassed a great treasure;

and the Queen represented, in the strongest terms, the necessity to which she was reduced, by her long wars with Spain, and the Irish rebellion. She even went so far, as actually to refuse subsidies, when she had not immediate occasion for the money. These are facts which will admit of no dispute, and may be set in opposition to a thousand trifling stories of her too close attention to certain minute articles of expence; that a selfish or avaricious disposition should be capable of such acts of generosity, is a moral impossibility.

The second observation I have to make is, that the Queen does not appear to me by any means so culpable in the affair of Davidson as she is generally represented. It would require a pamphlet instead of a paragraph to enter into a full discussion of this question. I shall only say, that Davidson appears to me much more the dupe of Burleigh than of Elizabeth. It seems evident, that the Secretary, at the suggestion of that nobleman, dispatched the warrant for the execution of the unfortunate Mary without the previous knowledge of the Queen, who could not be brought to a final determination upon the matter.

That her astonishment, anger, and indignation, were real, not assumed, appears from several circumstances. When the fatal intelligence was communicated, her countenance, Camden tells us, changed, her speech faltered, and she stood fixed, for some minutes, like a statue, till at length

length her passion vented itself in a violent burst of tears: if this was dissimulation, it must be confessed she had made a wonderful proficiency in that science indeed. Again, it is not pretended that the Queen's disposition led her to unnecessary acts of injustice and cruelty; yet Davidson was not only punished with great severity at the time, but he never could recover, in the smallest degree, any share of the Queen's favour and regard, when it could no longer answer any end to keep up the political farce. Even Burleigh himself, Davidson's principal adviser on this occasion, received such convincing proofs of the reality of the Queen's resentment, that he gave himself up for lost, and in great consternation begged permission to resign his employments and retire to his estate in the country.

This plainly proves, that Burleigh's advice to Davidson was given, not with any expectation of making his court to the Queen, to whose sentiments he cannot be supposed a stranger; but with a view to his own interest and security, which he never could be perfectly assured of as long as the Queen of Scots was in being. We have also the Queen's own solemn asseveration and appeal to God, in her letter to King James on the occasion, that this transaction passed without her knowledge or intention. "She could never, surely, she affirms, be esteemed so base and poor spirited, as that if she had really given orders for
this

this fatal execution, she could on any consideration be induced to deny them. Though sensible of the justice of the sentence, she had determined from motives of clemency not to carry it into effect, and could not but highly resent the temerity of those who had disappointed her merciful intentions." Upon the whole, it seems to me most probable, that the ministers of Elizabeth, I mean Burleigh, Walsingham, and Leicester, to whom the death of the Queen of Scots was "a consummation devoutly to be wished," not being able to bring Elizabeth to a firm and settled resolution on that point, ventured to encourage Davidson to send off the warrant for execution without her knowledge; hoping, perhaps, that she would in her heart not be much displeased with their presumption, or, at the worst, in consequence of the snare laid for the unfortunate Secretary, it was foreseen that the chief weight of the Queen's resentment would fall upon him; and they depended upon their own address, and the degree of royal favour they enjoyed, to screen them from any violent or lasting effects of the Queen's displeasure. If it can be supposed that the Queen herself was a party in this plot against Davidson, it must be allowed that her conduct in this instance was in the highest degree disgraceful, barbarous, and unjust; but so far as I am able to form a judgment of her disposition, she was not capable of such a degree of depravity and deceit; nor do I think there is sufficient ground to charge her

her with fullying, by an action of such complicated baseness, that illustrious character to which I have paid this willing, but inadequate, tribute of applause and admiration.

E S S A Y IV.

On CHRISTIANITY.

PART I.

THE critical and interesting situation in which mankind are placed, naturally prompts them to a thousand different enquiries and investigations, which are either immediately or remotely connected with that regard to our own happiness which is the grand spring of all our actions. Of these it must be acknowledged, that no one can merit a greater degree of attention than the question respecting the truth of the Christian religion. The life of man is so short and transient, and the evidence which reason affords of a continuation, or renovation, of our thinking powers in another state, so feeble and defective, that the authenticity of a religion, the fundamental article of which is a general resurrection to an immortal life, is a matter of the utmost moment and consequence. Many other religions there are, indeed, in the world, which make similar pretences to a divine original; but happily they include in them such gross and palpable

palpable violations of sense and consistency, and are so totally unaccompanied by any kind of evidence, that they scarcely demand or admit of a formal refutation. Christianity alone, of all the various religions of the universe which advance these supernatural claims, can ever attract the serious regard of an intelligent and enlightened mind; and though very plausible and specious, nay, though very subtle and cogent objections have been urged against even this religion, it must be admitted, by the ingenuous and candid infidel himself, that it is supported by an appearance at least of proof sufficient to perplex, if not to satisfy the judgment, to confound, if not to convince the understanding.—It is, however, undeniable, that many of the greatest geniuses which the world has ever produced, in the most enlightened age which that world has ever known, and in a country where freedom of enquiry has been pursued to the utmost possible extent, have not scrupled to avow their firm persuasion of the truth of this religion, and of the force and sufficiency of that evidence by which it is supported. Need I mention the illustrious names of NEWTON, LOCKE, MILTON, BACON, BOYLE, CLARKE, ADDISON, or HARTLEY, in proof of this assertion? Will any one venture to object to the competency of these judges? Are they deficient in knowledge, in understanding, or impartiality? or can they be accused of giving only a slight and cursory attention to the subject? No, in such minds, a firm and permanent conviction can be the result of nothing

nothing less than a full and accurate investigation, of which their writings afford ample proof. Is it possible then, without a mixture of indignation and contempt, to hear the fops and wits of the age attempt to turn that to ridicule, which the best and wisest of mankind have agreed to regard as sacred? This insignificant race of beings cannot be thought, indeed, deserving of much attention; but it is truly painful to a generous and liberal mind, to see such writers as a Hume, a Gibbon, or a Voltaire, attacking by sly insinuations, contemptuous sneers, or ambiguous innuendoes, that religion, which not only permits, but which dares and invites, the most accurate investigation, and the closest scrutiny. No one, indeed, who is possessed of any considerable strength or energy of mind, will be much influenced by these unfair and disingenuous artifices; but the danger is, lest men of inferior capacity, and more circumscribed understandings, should apprehend, that they may incur some degree of mental degradation by embracing that religion which was professed and defended by NEWTON and LOCKE. My intention is, in the present Essay, which may, possibly, fall into the hands of some who are not very deeply versed in Newton or Locke, to state a few of the leading arguments in favour of Christianity; and, in a succeeding one, I may, perhaps, consider a few of the more plausible objections to which it seems liable: and I shall begin, with offering such observations as occur to me on the express, positive,

tive, and direct testimony we have of the life and miracles of Jesus Christ, the great founder of the Christian religion; and it is to be presumed, that no one will be sceptical enough to dispute, that in the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius a very eminent and extraordinary person was born and flourished in Judea, who laid claim to divine communications, who was the founder of a religious sect or society, and who suffered crucifixion under the government of Pontius Pilate the Roman procurator.

This being premised, we are to consider, upon what authority the disciples and followers of Jesus asserted, that he was what he professed to be, viz. a prophet sent from God; and if we call in question the truth of their testimony, we have our choice of this alternative—either they were dupes or impostors, either they were deceived themselves, or the intentional deceivers of others. In vain do infidels exclaim, that this is an alternative applicable to all the religions that ever existed upon earth, and that they are under no obligation to ascertain the exact proportions of knavery and folly of which this or any other religion may be compounded. Of other religions, indeed, the knavery and the folly are fully apparent; nor is it material to determine, how far the one or the other may predominate; but with respect to Christianity, not the most distant symptom appears of either; and this provoking and perplexing dilemma still remains, and ever will remain.

remain, in full force and vigour. It cannot be pretended, that the apostles were imposed upon, with regard to those facts which compose the substance of their histories: however gross their education or their understandings may be represented, and however strong the delusions of ignorance and folly may in some cases be, it was totally impossible for them, if they were not absolutely insane, to suppose that they saw the blind restored to sight, the deaf to hearing, the dumb to speech, the sick to health, and even the dead to life, if no such events took place: and least of all is it possible they should believe, that Christ himself appeared to them three days after his public crucifixion, death and burial; that they maintained a social and friendly intercourse with him for forty days after his resurrection; and that they were afterwards eye-witnesses of his ascension to heaven, if these things were not really so. In a word, this branch of the alternative is so glaringly and monstrously absurd, that no man in his senses can consider it as capable of being defended; so that it may safely be pronounced, that if Christianity is an imposture, the apostles themselves were parties in that imposture; and guilty of inventing a fraudulent scheme, and of imposing upon the credulity and weakness of mankind; but this supposition is clogged with such insuperable difficulties, that it is scarcely more tenable than the former. The enquiry that most obviously presents itself on this occasion is, What motive could they have for this

this extraordinary attempt. As to Christ himself, it appears that he made, from the first, his own sufferings and death an essential part of his plan; differing in this, at least, from all other impostors that have appeared in the world: and after that event had taken place, his disciples and followers renounced all selfish considerations, sacrificed all their temporal prospects, for the sake of that religion which, according to this hypothesis, they knew to be false; which subjected them to numberless calamities; which was wholly destitute of evidence, and which therefore they laboured to propagate with scarcely a possibility of success; which was attended with ridicule, disgrace, difficulty, and danger; but to which they were so much attached, that they scrupled not to lay down their lives with composure, nay with alacrity and triumph in support of it, and upon every occasion to seal their testimony with their blood. Can we suppose, that a being so constituted as man should act a part so opposite to all his natural feelings, sentiments, and passions? For every effect there must certainly be an adequate cause; but, who will pretend to assign any probable or possible cause for a conduct so absurd, so unnatural, so unaccountable? Well might the poet exclaim,

Whence but from Heav'n, could men unskill'd in arts,

In different nations born, in different parts,

Weave such agreeing truths? or how, or why

Should all conspire to cheat us with a lie?

Unask'd their pains, ungrateful their advice,

Starving their gains, and martyrdom their price?

Dryden.

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But a still more extraordinary circumstance, if possible, is, that notwithstanding men were deterred by every conceivable motive from embracing this religion; notwithstanding the manifold dangers, and difficulties attending a public profession of it; notwithstanding its total defect in point of evidence; converts were every day added to the number of Christ's disciples, and in a few years symptoms appeared of a speedy and general diffusion of Christianity over all the provinces of the Roman empire. I speak of this religion as being totally destitute of evidence; for, upon the supposition I am combating, the apostles had none to offer; they had the weakness and imprudence, indeed, to appeal to certain ancient predictions, which, as they pretended, had now received their accomplishment: they had the unparalleled assurance to rest the truth of their religion upon recent miracles performed by Christ in the presence of all the people of Judea, but for which, excepting themselves, not a single voucher could be found; and upon their own assertion, which, after such convincing proof of their frenzy and extravagance, one would imagine was not likely to obtain much credit, that Jesus Christ was risen from the dead. Here then is another inexplicable phenomenon; for my part, at least, I do not possess a sufficient knowledge of the human mind to be capable of explaining how Christianity, in such circumstances, could make any degree of progress in the world, much less how it was possible that

that such numbers of intelligent and reflecting persons should be induced to embrace it. A late celebrated historian has indeed attempted to account for this astonishing fact upon natural principles; but it is obvious to remark, that the causes he enumerates imply a previous state of things, in which a firm faith in Christianity prevailed amongst the professors of it: this faith must have originated in evidence of some kind or other; and the grand difficulty still remains unsolved,—what that evidence was, and upon what foundation that faith rested. Let Mr. G. ascribe whatever influence he pleases to his secondary causes, as a philosopher, he will allow us, I presume, to consider those causes as themselves produced by some preceding cause, and he will, I hope, permit us quickly to enjoy the delusion, that the truth of Christianity will better account for the existence of those causes than the falsehood of it. What progress, to Mr. G. himself we appeal, would Mahometanism have made in that enlightened age, unconnected with motives of ambition or interest, trusting entirely to its own evidence for success, and proposing that evidence under every possible disadvantage? Under such circumstances the intemperate zeal of the professors, together with all the terrible threats and magnificent promises contained in the Koran, would doubtless have made little impression on the minds of thinking and intelligent persons, who would easily discover, if called upon to investigate, the extreme weakness and futility of its lofty pretensions. The

doctrine of a future state, it has been well observed, was not a novelty first promulgated by Christ; it was the doctrine of Plato and of Socrates five hundred years previous to his incarnation. Why then did it not produce equal conviction? For this reason only, because it was not attended by equal evidence.

I shall next endeavour to exhibit, as concisely as possible, the argument from prophecy on which Christians in general justly lay an equal stress, and on which the whole fabric of Christianity depends for support. It is an unquestionable fact, then, that in certain ancient writings, which the Jewish nation had long been accustomed to regard as sacred, plain intimations were given, that a very great and extraordinary person would make his appearance in the world previous to the political subversion of that state; various circumstances relative to the place of his birth, his family, his character, his office, the events of his life, and the manner of his death, are clearly specified. In Jesus, the author of the Christian religion, only can it be pretended that these predictions have received their accomplishment, and in him they centre as the rays of the sun in a focus, with a degree of strength and lustre which is truly astonishing. The subsequent predictions of Christ himself and his apostles, particularly of the apostle Paul, describing in the most express and unambiguous language the nature and extent of that grand apostacy which has actually taken place in
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the Christian church, are of such a nature as must, I think, impress conviction on every mind not previously biassed by the most unreasonable prejudice. The narrow limits I have prescribed to myself will not allow me to attempt to traverse this mighty maze; but there are two considerations, connected with the prophetic branch of evidence, which I cannot wholly omit to mention. The first is, the present state and circumstances of the Jewish nation. The Jewish prophets have unanimously asserted, and Christianity consequently supposes, a general restoration of that people to their own country, where they may again perhaps become the medium of the divine communications to the rest of mankind. Now it must be allowed, that the bare possibility of the fulfilment of a prediction of this nature is itself a most singular and extraordinary circumstance. Two thousand years ago the nation of the Jews, a pretty Arabian horde, as they have been contemptuously styled, were conquered by the Babylonians, a great and powerful people, and carried far away into captivity; and though it might naturally be expected, that they would in process of time have coalesced with their conquerors, and have been ultimately absorbed and annihilated by the union, the fact is, that, dispersed and scattered as they have almost ever since been over the face of the globe, they have never, perhaps, in a single instance, in any country, lost their religious or national distinctions, and they are now generally supposed to be as

numerous as before the Babylonian, or, as some think, even the Assyrian captivity. This is perfectly amazing; it is contrary to all history, and all experience of the course of human affairs in similar cases; it has been boldly and not improperly styled a standing miracle. Within one thousand or twelve hundred years back, a great variety of extraordinary and important revolutions have taken place among the nations of Europe. In our own country, the Britons were conquered by the Saxons, the Saxons by the Danes, and the Danes and Saxons by the Normans; but in a few centuries these opposite and hostile nations were consolidated into one indistinguishable mass. A part of the British nation indeed, by retiring into an inaccessible and mountainous country, and secluding themselves from the rest of the island, has retained its language and nationality, though not its religion, to the present time; but this cannot be looked upon as in any degree analogous to the state of the Jews.

Italy, about the same time that Britain was subdued by the Saxons, was conquered by the Goths and Vandals; and it is not easy to conceive a more striking contrast, than that which subsisted between the polished inhabitants of that delightful country, and their savage invaders; and yet how soon did all distinction cease between them! In France, the Roman colonies gradually assimilated with the ancient Gauls; and in Spain, though the Moors continued for several ages, and
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till their final expulsion, a distinct people, after they were once reduced to a state of submission and subjection their numbers very sensibly diminished; and there is no room to doubt, but that they would in course of time have mingled with the general mass: but with regard to the Jews, the wonder is, that though they do not in any country where they are settled bear any proportion to the natural inhabitants, though they are universally reduced to a state of the lowest subjection, and even exposed to hatred, contempt, and persecution; yet in no instance does there seem to be any appearance or probability of diminution with respect to their numbers, in no instance do they discover any decay of attachment to their religious principles. According to the best information I could ever obtain from history, the situation of the Jews is absolutely without example; but it should at the same time be remembered, that the reality of a miraculous interposition respecting this nation by no means depends upon the proving it to be strictly *unique*; that this situation is uncommon and extraordinary will be readily admitted, and yet, extraordinary as it may be deemed, it is perfectly conformable to those ancient oracles and prophecies which have always been regarded by them as sacred and divine. The case of the remaining descendants of the ancient Britons is likewise, undoubtedly, very remarkable and singular; but it by no means amounts to a proof, or even a presumption, of a

supernatural interposition; but if it could be proved, that the present condition and circumstances of that people were the subject of clear and express predictions pronounced two thousand years ago, then indeed we might well suppose, and I think we must unavoidable suppose, the intervention of a sagacity and foresight more than human; and this is the conclusion which must unavoidably result from an impartial consideration of the peculiar and unprecedented situation of the Jewish nation, taken in connection with those antient prophecies which either express or imply it.

The second observation I have to make is this: It is evident, from the express declarations of Christ and his apostles, that Christianity was originally destined, as indeed it is calculated, for an universal religion: this event is the subject of numerous prophecies. Now it is truly remarkable, that the present situation of things in the world is such, that there seems a strong probability, if we reason merely from the regular operation of moral causes, that the time will come when Christianity shall be diffused throughout the universe. Those nations which have embraced the Christian religion have acquired so complete an ascendancy over the rest of mankind, that as it is utterly incredible on the one hand that they themselves should be induced to forsake the religion of their ancestors, and to adopt any other system from nations comparatively illiterate and barbarous; so, on the other hand, it seems perfectly

fectly consonant to the usual course of human events, that as the arts, the arms, and the learning of Europe are every day making some progress, the religion of Europe will also gradually extend itself; and as to the important but accidental circumstance of its being professed by that part of the globe which has obtained so prodigious and decisive a superiority, it possesses the intrinsic advantage of an appearance of evidence, at least, as well as moral excellence, far beyond that of any religion which can be opposed to it, what can be the result of a contest so circumstanced, but the final downfall of those various systems of superstition and absurdity which at present prevail in the world? A long succession of ages must no doubt elapse previous to this glorious consummation; but if we consider the different aspect which Christianity wears at present, from that which it presented two or three centuries ago; if we consider the prodigious improvements which have been made during this period in every branch of human knowledge; if we consider with how much greater facility that knowledge is now capable of being communicated; if we consider the mutual intercourse which is established, and the intimate connections which subsist, between the most distant parts of the globe; if we consider the ardent and enterprising spirit by which the European nations are animated; the surprising effects which that spirit has already produced, and the still more wonderful effects which it is calculated

calculated to produce; it will not appear to a reflecting mind incredible or improbable, that Christianity, abstracted from the idea of a particular superintending providence, will insensibly prevail over all opposition, and ultimately become the universal religion of mankind. But is it possible that a few illiterate impostors, or, at best, enthusiasts, should frame a religious system which thus bids fair to descend to the latest generations, bidding defiance to the united attacks of wit, learning, and malice? Is it possible that the original author of this wonderful delusion, the man who bled on Calvary, should be acknowledged as the immediate delegate of heaven, commissioned to execute the purposes of divine compassion and mercy, by those who may be reasonably supposed both able and willing to detect and expose the fraud, however cunningly devised, by the wisest and best of mankind, by the most enlightened geniuses of the most enlightened ages and countries? This is monstrous and incredible; a thing past all comprehension and belief: it is impossible that an imposture framed, under such circumstances, could endure the test of a serious and impartial discussion; if a forgery, it must be a gross and palpable one, such as no man of sense or reflection could hesitate for a moment whether to receive or reject. What a paradox for the enemies of Christianity to solve! that a religion, which they affirm to be totally destitute of evidence, should have prevailed over such potent opposition, and

and should still go on, conquering and to conquer, by the mere force of evidence.

But thirdly, Independent of the proofs arising from testimony, and from prophecy, there is another argument which has often been urged by the advocates of Christianity with great success; and that is, the intrinsic excellence of our holy religion. This has been generally distinguished by the appellation of the *internal evidence* of Christianity; and of this a striking view has been given by an elegant and justly admired writer of our own times. I do not profess, indeed, to approve, much less to vindicate, all that Mr. Jenyns has thought proper to advance in that popular performance. I do not, for my own part, see how the divinity of any contested doctrine can be inferred from its "contrariety to every principle of human reason, as well as to all our ideas of the divine attributes." I content myself with inferring the divine origin of Christianity from its perfect consonancy, to the principles of natural religion, and to those ideas which reason teaches us to entertain of the supreme Being; not that I mean to countenance the opinion, that Christianity is as old as the creation, or that unassisted reason was capable of demonstrating those sublime truths which constitute the fundamental articles of the Christian faith; but my meaning is, that Christianity is such a revelation as reason would teach us to hope for, and

and with gratitude and joy to receive; it confirms those exalted ideas which reason taught some of her most favoured votaries to entertain of the being and perfections of a God, of the reality of a future state of existence, of the necessity of virtue in order to attain to happiness in that state; and it inculcates a system of the purest morality, such as has a direct tendency to diffuse a universal spirit of benevolence, unity, and concord. This religion, while it ascribes glory to God in the highest, breathes peace on earth, and good-will to men. In a word, it is a religion worthy of its divine author; it is not only a system too refined and exalted for a few ignorant and illiterate men to frame or invent; but it is far superior in dignity, in consistency, and utility, to all that the genius, the learning, and the philanthropy, of a Socrates, a Plato, a Tully, a Seneca, or an Antoninus, could effect in their united and immortal labours, for the purpose of instructing and of reforming mankind.

ESSAY V.

On CHRISTIANITY.

PART II.

THAT objection which seems entitled to our first notice and attention, as being, if not the most formidable, perhaps the most acute and ingenious, which has ever been urged by the enemies of Christianity, and also as being of such a nature, as, if valid, to supersede all other objections, is contained in Mr. Hume's celebrated Essay on Miracles. I shall state it as fairly and concisely as possible. "A miracle," says Mr Hume, "is a violation of the established laws of nature. Now, the credit due to miracles rests entirely upon testimony; but no testimony can be sufficient in this case to produce a rational conviction; for however cogent the proof derived from this source may be represented, still it must be acknowledged, that the falsehood of the strongest testimony does not amount to a violation of the established laws of nature, or, in other words, is not absolutely miraculous:—therefore, if we believe a miracle upon the credit of the strongest human testimony conceivable, we admit,

admit, of two improbable things, that which is most improbable ; whereas reason requires us to reject the miracle, except the falsehood of the testimony should be more miraculous than the event it is intended to establish."

This is the objection in its full force ; but however plausible and ingenious it may be deemed, the fallacy of it immediately appears from this consideration, that the evidence of testimony obviously admits of such an accumulation of force, as to produce necessarily and mechanically a degree of conviction fully equal to the evidence of sense ; whatever is capable then of being proved by the senses, is capable of being equally proved by testimony. No rational person can any more entertain a doubt of the existence of such a city as Paris, or such a man as the King of France, than of his own existence :—the evidence of testimony is here plainly equal to ocular demonstration. But Mr. Hume will not deny, that a man may be rationally convinced of a miracle by ocular demonstration ; then why not on such evidence as is equivalent to ocular demonstration ? To say, that the testimony upon which Christianity is founded is of inferior force, is totally to desert his argument, which positively denies the sufficiency of that species of evidence, abstractly considered, to prove any event of a miraculous nature. But were the miracles of Christ supported by the same kind and degree of evidence with that which compels us to believe the existence of such a country as France, or such a city as Paris,

Paris; it would be impossible for Mr. Hume, notwithstanding all his fine-spun reasonings, to disbelieve, or even to doubt, the reality of them; and, certainly, it cannot be irrational to believe, where it is impossible to disbelieve. Nevertheless, as whatever truth is capable of being opposed by argument is capable of being defended by argument, this famous paradox of Mr. Hume, no doubt, demands a more strict and logical confutation. The objection resolves itself into two distinct propositions, one of which is true, and the other false. 1st, It is true, that a weaker evidence cannot destroy a stronger; in other words, it must be admitted, that of two inconsistent propositions that is to be adopted which is, upon the whole, best supported by proof, or most probable. But, 2dly, It is false, that a miracle is invariably to be regarded as the greatest of all improbabilities.—"Uniform experience," as Mr. Hume well observes, "is the basis of rational assurance;" and our uniform experience of human nature must convince us, that men are wholly actuated by motives. Now, if in order to obviate the testimony which is offered to authenticate an event of a miraculous nature, the resurrection of Christ for instance, it is necessary to suppose, that the attestors were actuated by such motives as are totally incompatible with those immutable principles upon which human nature is founded, it would be absurd in such a case not to admit the reality of the miracle; as it would doubtless be much more

more incredible, that the fundamental principles of human nature should suffer a total alteration, than that the Creator of the world should condescend, in a way which we call miraculous, to make a revelation of his will to mankind. In this supposition there is certainly nothing absurd or improbable in itself. It is objected only, that such an interposition is not agreeable to experience. Not to our experience, it must be acknowledged, but to assert that it is not agreeable to the experience of former ages, is evidently to beg the question. It is positively affirmed, that such interposition has actually taken place; but when, or by whom, was it ever pretended, that human nature was 2000 years ago constituted on principles diametrically opposite to those by which it is actuated at present? In this case, therefore, we have the experience of all ages, to oppose to an experience not uniformly confirmed by the testimony of former ages. In a word, the hypothesis which implies a want of uniformity in human nature involves in it a complication of confusion and absurdity, being wholly unsupported by evidence, and violating every principle of reason; but the supposition which admits a divine miraculous interposition is confirmed by a cloud of witnesses, and it is likewise perfectly consonant to those ideas which reason teaches, or at least favours, respecting the nature and attributes of the Deity, and agreeable to the general analogy of the divine government.

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It would be improper to pass unnoticed another sophism of Mr. Hume, closely connected with the former, and worthy of the same author. He pretends, that of two opposite arguments, the superior only gives us an assurance corresponding to that degree of force which remains after deducting the inferior. This is a maxim which seems calculated to introduce a system of universal scepticism; for if it is just, we cannot attain to a full assurance of any one truth, but what admits of mathematical demonstration. How happens it, then, that Mr. Hume should, in contradiction to his own theory, reject all the proofs and evidences of Christianity with such positive disdain? It cannot be denied that, taken collectively, they form a strong body of evidence, amounting to what some have not scrupled to stile a moral demonstration. But, replies Mr. Hume, I reject this evidence, because it is inconsistent with other evidence which I regard as superior in force. But, good Sir, will you please to deduct the force of the inferior from the force of the superior evidence, and then tell us what the balance amounts to in favour of infidelity. Surely if this account was fairly stated, you would be constrained, if ingenuous, upon your own hypothesis, to exclaim, with King Agrippa, "Almost I am persuaded to be a Christian." But, in order to relieve Mr. Hume from this awkward dilemma, it may be observed, that moral evidence admits of a great variety of degrees, such as is generally distinguished by the terms demonstrative, conclusive, satisfactory,

tory, &c. Now a proposition established by demonstrative, conclusive, or satisfactory evidence, must necessarily be regarded as true; and it so happens that truth admits of no degrees, and whatever may become of the calculations of the Philosopher, the axiom of the Poet stands uncontradicted, that "Truth is Truth to the end of the reckoning." Therefore, if the evidence is such as is sufficient to produce a clear conviction of the truth of the proposition in question, it is impossible to have recourse to that metaphysical deduction recommended by Mr. Hume, for truth admits of no deduction or diminution whatever.

Thus, if I am persuaded by any evidence, whether it be, or not be, strictly demonstrative that Christianity is true; if I am assailed by ten thousand objections, my faith is not shaken by the mere consideration of an opposition of arguments, nor am I in the least inclined to sacrifice the smallest particle of the truth in such circumstances, under the specious pretext of philosophical impartiality, and of allowing due weight to the arguments on both sides; for the mind rests with exactly the same security upon moral certainty, and even upon evidence many degrees short of moral certainty, as upon mathematical demonstration. And I maintain, that with respect to Christianity, as in a thousand other cases, the evidence is so striking, and forcible, as to be capable of producing, and it has actually produced in thousands, a firm and rational conviction of its truth.

truth. In this state of mind objections must of course cease to influence; and however plausible they might be deemed while there was room for doubt, let impartial reason once pronounce the evidence sufficient, they instantly vanish and dissolve; and we believe the astonishing accounts of the fall of the Persian or Peruvian Empires with as little hesitation as we admit that two and two are equal to four, or that the whole is greater than the part.

But, 2dly, It has been triumphantly asked concerning christianity, by some of its adversaries, *Cui bono?* They boldly assert, that nothing of importance is contained in revelation which was not discoverable by the light of reason; they profess to admit the great doctrines of the unity and perfections of God; of the essential and unalterable distinction between moral good and evil; of the immateriality and immortality of the soul; and of a future state of rewards and punishments: all these things they admit; admit! but upon what ground? I would not willingly depreciate human reason and understanding, but I profess it appears to me very doubtful, whether, upon natural principles, any one of these articles will admit of satisfactory proof. The best solution of that difficult question, What religious truths are discoverable by the light of reason, is afforded by recurring to facts; and it will indisputably appear, that even in those ages and countries which are most celebrated for intellectual

improvements of every kind, very little advance was made in religious knowledge: it is true, a few of the heathen philosophers and moralists attained to a comparatively just view of the subject, but mixed with much error, darkness, and uncertainty;—but now each prating fool becomes a Socrates; and though Plato, Tully, and Seneca were scarcely able to attain a glimpse of divine truths, it was owing it seems not to the obscurity in which those truths were involved, but to their own stupidity and dullness of apprehension; for in these times, a pert templar, a magazine critic, or even a Grub-street garatteer, those oracles of reason, can develop these supposed mysteries with perfect ease. To be serious, as it cannot be expected that I should in the compass of a short Essay, enter fully into the discussion of an objection of this general and extensive nature, a short and general answer must suffice. I say then, I deny the fact on which the objection is founded. I say, that human reason is not capable of affording full and satisfactory evidence of the great truths of religion. I say, that the greatest geniuses, and most celebrated philosophers of antiquity, were never able to attain to any thing like a firm conviction of the truth of these fundamental doctrines; and I say, that it is in the highest degree improbable, that the world would ever have been influenced in any considerable degree by any attempts to inculcate these truths upon natural principles; because the evidence on which they

they rested was in itself so abstruse, as to be far above the comprehension of vulgar capacities; and at the same time so ambiguous, that the few who were capable of comprehending it, could never attain to a thorough persuasion of the truth and certainty of the principles which it was the object of that evidence to establish. But, 3dly, There are some who are perfectly sensible of the value and importance of the discoveries made by revelation, and who would willingly embrace Christianity, were they not deterred by an idea, that it also contains certain absurd and irrational tenets, such as are inconsistent with common sense and natural propriety; and, therefore, cannot possibly be supposed to proceed from a Being of perfect wisdom and knowledge—such as the doctrines of the Trinity and the atonement, of predestination, of original sin, &c. not to mention the strange and fabulous accounts recorded in those books which compose the Jewish Canon; such as the Mosaic account of creation; of the fall of man; of the general deluge, and the whole history of the Jewish nation. In answer to this, I shall beg leave to observe, that it is extremely rash and inexcusable to reject the plain and positive proofs of Christianity, on account of the absurdities which that religion may be supposed to inculcate, previous to a serious and impartial examination whether those absurdities are really included in it or not. For my own part, I have read the New Testament with some degree of attention, and I

never yet could discover in it the doctrine of the Trinity, or any thing resembling such a doctrine; nor has the word so much as once occurred to me in all my examinations and researches. As to the doctrine of the atonement, I do not deny it to be the uniform doctrine of scripture, that *the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin*. The death of Christ was, undoubtedly, an essential part of the divine plan of redemption; and who will stand up and venture to affirm, that a better or more eligible plan might have been adopted? Shall folly teach wisdom how to act? Shall guilty man presume to prescribe to infinite power and goodness the terms of his own pardon and acceptance?

Some persons, however, it must be acknowledged, have strangely disfigured and misrepresented this divine truth, by their weak and confident assertions that the death of Christ was truly and literally a compensation and equivalent for the sins of mankind. As the guilt of sin, say these profound logicians and theologists, is infinite, by being committed against an infinite Being, it was impossible that this guilt could be expiated but by the sufferings and death of Christ, whose equal participation in the divine nature gave an infinite efficacy to that sacrifice which he offered on the cross for the sins of the elect. Such tenets as these it would be a hard task indeed to reconcile to common sense; but, happily, it would be just as difficult to reconcile them to the sense of scripture; for there
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we read, that "God so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten Son to die for our sakes." This we are given to understand was the mode in which infinite goodness was determined by infinite wisdom to exert itself in our behalf. The doctrine of original sin, so far as it is a scriptural doctrine, is perfectly agreeable to reason and experience; and it no more belongs to revealed than to natural religion to account for those evil propensities inherent in our nature, and which too frequently betray the best and wisest of the human race into actual violations of the divine law. But it has happened, I think, that the most vociferous exclamations have been raised against that doctrine, which, of all others, is least liable to exception, the doctrine of Election or Predestination: I say not that this sublime article of the Christian faith has not been debased, by the the Calvinistic representation of it; but it is an unquestionable truth, that happiness and misery are dispensed to every intelligent being, in such proportions as God in his sovereign wisdom thinks fit. "He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy." Nevertheless, we may rest secure on this assurance, "that without holiness no man shall see the LORD;" and according to the different degrees of improvement to which we may attain in moral excellence shall we participate of the divine favour; and it would be as absurd and extravagant to neglect the means of moral and religious improvement, because there is an eternal purpose respecting us

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subsisting in the Divine mind, as it would be to neglect our temporal interests, and all the common concerns of life, because the events which shall befall us in the present world are likewise fore-known and fore-ordained. With respect to the difficulties attending the Mosaic and Jewish histories, this general consideration may perhaps be of some use: That if the truth of Christianity is sufficiently established, an independant proof of the credibility of these ancient writings, though I believe they admit of it, is not to be peremptorily demanded. Christianity undoubtedly supposes that the Jewish nation was distinguished from all others by a series of supernatural interpositions; but whether that series is related with accuracy by the Jewish historians; whether any spurious additions have in a long course of ages been made to these writings; whether the Jewish traditions related by Moses respecting the creation of the world, the fall of Adam, or the general deluge, &c. may be implicitly depended upon; whether Sampson really killed a thousand men with the jawbone of an ass; or whether Balaam's ass did or did not address his master in a rational and articulate speech; all these things, I say, are matters of comparatively trifling import, and every one is at liberty to form the best hypothesis he can for his own satisfaction; but it must surely be a very extraordinary and preposterous species of incredulity which should reject the clear and positive evidence of Christ's resurrection, because the history of Balaam and his
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als may perhaps rest upon slender and dubious authority. 4thly, It is objected, "that probable evidence only is or can be offered by the advocates of Christianity in its behalf. Now it might, say these objectors, be reasonably presumed, that a divine revelation would be attended with demonstrative and irresistible evidence of its divine authority; such as should flash conviction on the most obstinate and obdurate hearts; nor has this religion been in fact productive of those beneficial effects which might be expected from a genuine revelation of the Divine will." That Christianity might have been accompanied by such irresistible evidence as would have compelled conviction, cannot be doubted; but that such an high degree of evidence was reasonably to be expected, I utterly deny; according to the obvious analogy of nature, nothing more than probability could be hoped for, or perhaps rationally desired. Man is so formed as to act on probabilities in all cases which concern his present or future happiness: to ascertain the comparative importance of these probabilities, and to frame our conduct agreeably to the views we entertain of that importance, is the perfection of human wisdom. He who waits for demonstration where probability only is attainable, is chargeable with the absurdity attributed to the countryman waiting on the river's banks: He remains for ever inactive, in expectation of that which will never be; the tide of time shall roll on, but never shall any one in this state of trial and probation be indulged on any subject
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relative to man's duty or happiness, with evidence of such kind or degree as shall preclude him from the full exercise of his rational and intellectual powers; and by an impartial and diligent exertion of these powers, the evidence attending Christianity will quickly appear to be sufficiently probable to satisfy the understanding and to influence the conduct; and though we should be ultimately mistaken, we may in this case, if in any, adopt the expression of the Poet, and say, in our vindication,

“It had been vicious to have mistrusted.”

As to the plea that Christianity has not been productive of those signal benefits which might have been expected from a divine revelation, it is enough to reply, that expectation is vague and indefinite. The fact is, that the Christian religion, greatly as it has been corrupted, has produced a mighty reformation of morals in the world. We see plainly that it is in a state of progression, and in proportion as it is better understood, and more generally diffused, its effects will be more happy and beneficial. In this enlightened age and country a Christian of very moderate attainments in virtue would be shocked at the recital of the enormous vices which were almost universally prevalent in the ages of antiquity. The heathens, as is well known, attributed the grossest crimes and immoralities even to their deities; how then could it be expected that they themselves should abstain from the practice of them. Our Saviour compares the Gospel to a small seed, which being cast into the earth, at length becomes

becomes a tall and spreading tree, so that birds seek for shelter in the branches of it; this prophetic description will no doubt in due time be realized: "The leaves of the tree are destined for the healing of the nations." In the mean time we have no right to complain of the slow and gradual progress of this grand scheme of reformation, nor have we any more reason to expect a clear solution of this difficulty, Why does not Christianity afford an immediate and complete remedy for moral evil? than of the still greater difficulty, Why was evil itself introduced into the universe?

5thly, It is said, "that if the miracles of Christ were real miracles, it is not possible that any degree of incredulity or prejudice could have resisted the force of them, but an immediate conversion of the Jewish nation, and in a short time of the whole Gentile world, must have been the inevitable consequence of such an astonishing exertion of divine power." But I cannot help thinking that this objection argues either great ignorance of human nature, or of the actual state of things at the time of Christ's appearance. It is not easy for us to form an idea of the prodigious shock which the principles of the Christian religion gave to all the preconceived opinions and prejudices of the Jews. That the Messiah, their long expected prince and Saviour, should at last appear in circumstances so mean, obscure, and indigent; that the great Deliverer, so magnificently described by the prophets of old, should be

no other than Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter's son; that the kingdom he came to establish should be not of this world, but of a wholly spiritual nature; that the benefits and privileges of it, should not be confined to God's peculiar people, but extended to the Gentile nations; that a few illiterate fishermen should be selected as the friends and followers of the Messiah, and employed as the great instruments of diffusing his religion, to the exclusion of the learned, the noble, and the mighty of the land; that after being exposed to every species of indignity and persecution in the short course of his life, he should suffer a painful and ignominious death upon the cross; these were things utterly irreconcilable with the opinions which were most deeply rooted in their minds. They were a rock of offence, which even the evidence of miracles themselves was unable to remove. "He pretended to save others, but himself he cannot save;" this was in their apprehension an argument of the most clear and convincing nature. They rather chose to ascribe those supernatural works, the reality of which they could not deny, to the agency of Beelzebub, than to that of the Spirit of God; and let any one duly reflect upon the astonishing and invincible force of human prejudices, and he will, I think, be convinced, that at this very day miracles, similar to those of Christ, would be found equally insufficient to break the shackles of Mahometan delusion and Popish superstition. I make not the least question, but that a man who should openly maintain

maintain at Constantinople that Mahomet was a blasphemous impostor, would be impaled; or at Madrid, that transubstantiation was an impious absurdity, would be brought to the stake, though they were able to establish their assertions even by an appeal to miracles; whatever amazement might be excited, such a man would certainly upon the whole be regarded by the bulk of the people as a false prophet. It appears that for a time the miracles pretended to be wrought at the tomb of the Abbé Paris gained considerable credit in so enlightened a country as France, but I never heard of a single Molinist who was converted to Jansenism in consequence of them. What I have said respecting the Jews may easily be seen to apply with still greater force to the Gentiles, whose prejudices, though totally different, were doubtless equally strong; and if the Jews were not to be convinced though one rose from the dead, it cannot be supposed that the Gentiles would be more inclined to listen to evidence which came to them with diminished force; and as it is well known that the Jews were regarded with contempt by the Greeks and Romans as a credulous and bigotted nation, it may reasonably be presumed, that the first account of a new religion, supported by miracles, which obtained so little credit in Judea itself, would be treated with the highest disdain and derision by the learned heathens, and would be rejected without hesitation or examination.

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6thly, There is one objection more, and it is the only one I can recollect, which seems to have any considerable claim to notice. "How can that revelation, it is said, be of divine authority, which is not perfectly consistent with itself? Now it is easy to point out a variety of inconsistencies, both with respect to facts and reasonings, in those books which compose the canon of scripture, and in which only the Christian religion is contained?" This objection is founded upon a very erroneous notion, which has been and still is too much countenanced by the professors of Christianity themselves, who in general maintain that the sacred writings were composed under the immediate influence of divine inspiration; a notion highly improbable in itself, plainly contrary to the general tenor of scripture, and wholly destitute of proof, excepting such as may be derived from a gross perversion of a few detached passages. The Apostles and Evangelists never pretended, like the great impostor Mahomet, that their writings were dictated by the Angel Gabriel, or ever urged the perfection of their own compositions, as a decisive proof of the authenticity of the Christian religion. They were indeed witnesses faithful and true, men of strict integrity, who had the best opportunity of being informed of the leading facts which they asserted, and who were under no conceivable temptation to wish to impose a vile and incredible falsehood upon the world, and men who were of all others least likely to succeed in so
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absurd an attempt; but the testimony they gave to the truth of Christianity was to all intents a human testimony, established indeed by miracles and prophecies, but by no means exempt from those venial errors which accompany every thing human. Were I even convinced, that in a decree promulgated by the joint authority of the twelve Apostles, convened in general council, there were contained any article which demonstrated that they were not entirely emancipated from Jewish weakness and prejudice; were it clearly proved, that the reasonings of St. Paul, or St. Peter, were sometimes inclusive, or that the facts reported by St. Luke, or St. Matthew, were in some points inaccurately stated, I should still believe, with exactly the same degree of confidence, that Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead, and that he will come again to judge the world in righteousness: "But if an entire and implicit dependance is not to be placed on every part of holy writ, where shall we draw the line? If a habit of scepticism is indulged, where shall we stop?" Such is the language of weakness and timidity. But it may be asked, what necessity is there for drawing a precise line or boundary in this case, or what pretence is there for requiring a degree of precision on this subject, which moral subjects in general and the very nature of moral evidence do not admit?—Let every man use that portion of reason and understanding which God hath given him, for the purpose of investigating

investigating the evidence and the principles of Christianity, and let him determine for himself, after a cool and impartial deliberation, what this religion teaches, and upon what authority it stands. Let not the apprehension or reproach of scepticism alarm or deter him from the most perfect freedom of enquiry; for that investigation which does not originate in doubt, can never terminate in rational conviction.

E S S A Y VI.

On HEREDITARY SUCCESSION.

AT the first view, it must be acknowledged that the idea of *hereditary succession* appears so whimsical, and even absurd, that one is tempted to wonder how it could have obtained so decided a preference in almost all civilized countries. In an affair so important to the general interests of mankind, as the choice of those persons who are destined to hold the highest rank in civil communities, and are invested with such powers as the strongest political necessity only could induce an enlightened people to intrust to any individuals, is it not contrary to every principle of reason and common sense, to lay a greater stress upon the single and accidental circumstance of birth, than upon those moral and intellectual qualities which have an immediate tendency to secure the great ends of government, the peace, happiness, and prosperity of the community? such as genius, wisdom, knowledge, beneficence, or valour—qualities which must ever excite the highest degree of esteem and admiration. It would, however, be easy to shew, and it has in fact been repeatedly demonstrated, that hereditary succession is attended

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by advantages which infinitely overbalance the inconveniencies to which it is liable; and that a power of electing the supreme magistrate, in whatever hands it might be lodged, must in all probability be productive of such a degree of political animosity, disorder, and confusion, that the possession of such a privilege would be a great and real misfortune. In this country, at least, this truth is so generally acknowledged, that it would be very superfluous to enter into a formal discussion of it. Perhaps, amongst all the political zealots with which this kingdom abounds in these days of innovation and reformation, there is not one who would wish to extend our liberties by converting this ancient hereditary monarchy into an elective one. But there is another question relative to this subject, of much less consequence indeed, which may not, perhaps, be so easily solved, or the solution of which, at least, may not afford such universal satisfaction. It is this: Whether the order of succession established in this monarchy, is that which is in itself most eligible; or, in other words, that which is most likely to preserve the public peace and tranquillity? I do not hesitate to confess, that in my opinion it is not; and this opinion I shall endeavour to support, by such considerations as have occurred to me when I have chanced to turn my thoughts to this subject.

It is well known how strongly the French nation is attached to their famous Salique law, which
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is universally regarded as a fundamental law of the monarchy: and, though it has been the accidental occasion of the greatest misfortunes which that kingdom has ever experienced, it appears founded on the best and soundest principles of legislative policy. The preposterous pretensions of Edward III. to the crown of France, evidently laid the foundation of that rancourous animosity which has so long subsisted, and which still subsists, between the two countries of England and France, and which has been the source of infinite misery to both. I do not scruple to stile them preposterous, because, whether the validity of the Salique law was or was not admitted, they were equally opposite to the most obvious dictates of justice and equity. There was indeed no colourable pretext to object to the validity of a law which had all the force human sanctions can give; but, on the supposition that the objections urged by Edward were well founded, it is plain that the right of succession devolved on Charles, King of Navarre, who was descended from a daughter of Lewis Hutin, whereas Edward was son of Isabella, sister to that monarch. It has been observed, and I think not very superstitiously, that great national crimes have commonly been followed by great national punishments, and sometimes by such as have borne a signal analogy to the nature of the offence; and it may be remarked, that the bloody wars occasioned by the claims so unwarrantably advanced by Edward III. to the crown of France,

and which, contrary to every principle of policy as well as justice, was for a series of years countenanced and supported by the parliament and people of England, had scarcely subsided, when the flames of civil discord were kindled in this country, and spread with wonderful rapidity, in consequence of the absurd prejudices generally entertained with respect to this very point, I mean the right of succession; which prejudices originated in, or at least were strongly confirmed by, the great stress which the nation had been accustomed to place on pretensions transmitted through a similar medium; and these flames were not finally extinguished till the last male descendant of the numerous family of Edward III. had fallen a victim to the contest, and the whole house, and the very name of Plantagenet, was for ever annihilated. In order to illustrate these observations, it must be remembered, that the heroic Prince of Wales, so well known in history by the appellation of Edward the Black Prince, unfortunately for the nation, died some years previous to his father, and left an only son, afterward Richard II. who inherited neither the virtues nor talents of his famous progenitors. By a series of odious and arbitrary acts he excited the indignation and resentment of the nation to such a degree, that when Henry Duke of Lancaster, afterwards King Henry IV. returned from exile to claim his paternal inheritance, which had been wrested from him by regal violence, Richard found himself suddenly deserted by

by all descriptions of persons, who crowded, as it were in emulation of each other, to the standard of his adversary. In consequence of which, he was soon reduced to the fatal necessity of consenting to his own deposition, and in a full and free parliament the crown was unanimously conferred upon the Duke of Lancaster, as a reward due to his patriotism and valour; and it was quietly transmitted to his son, the victorious Henry V.; at whose death it was placed, without opposition, upon the head of his infant heir, Henry VI. who peaceably enjoyed it for more than thirty years. Might it not then reasonably be imagined, that an uninterrupted possession of half a century would have sufficed to have given firmness and stability to a title originally founded on parliamentary authority, and confirmed by the universal and joyful acquiescence of the nation? on the contrary, however, the title of the reigning family was in fact supposed to be so palpably defective, that a growing dissatisfaction seems to have pervaded the minds of all ranks of persons; and when Richard Duke of York openly avowed his resolution "to pluck the crown from feeble Henry's head," he found the nation very generally disposed to favour and support his pretensions; and, during the long civil contests which succeeded, the affections of the nation appeared invariably attached to the House of York, which gained, and in the person of Edward IV. maintained, firm possession of the crown for many years, and nothing less than the com-

plicated guilt of Richard III. could have paved the way for the restoration of the House of Lancaster; and it is even probable that Henry VII. though a prince of great abilities, could not long have retained possession, had he not so far condescended to the prejudices of the nation as to unite the two families by a marriage with Elizabeth, eldest daughter of Edward IV. and, according to the maxims of succession adopted by the nation in general, undoubted heirs of the House of York. These maxims, or prejudices, as I think they ought rather to be stiled, seem, I say, to have originated in the absurd predilection which the English nation entertained in favour of the title of the Kings of England to the Crown of France; and there was, indeed, a manifest inconsistency in claiming the Crown of France by virtue of a descent from the female line, whilst the Crown of England was held by the Princes of the House of Lancaster, to the exclusion of the female line, for parliamentary authority was in those ages thought by much too slight a foundation for a claim of such magnitude to rest upon, not to mention that the House of Valois could equally plead the authority of the General Assembly of Estates in France. There had been no example of a female reign in England since the dissolution of the heptarchy; and though Henry II. succeeded in right of his mother, the Empress Maud, it must be remembered that the male branches of the Norman line were totally extinct: the attachment of the English nation
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therefore to this order of succession, cannot, I think, be traced to any other source. The House of Lancaster indeed enjoyed an important advantage over the rival family, as being the undoubted elder male branch existing of the Royal House of Plantagenet, being descended from John of Gaunt, third son of the common progenitor Edward III. The House of York founded their claims on a descent from Lionel Duke of Clarence, second son of that monarch, whose only daughter, Philippa, intermarried with Edmund Mortimer Earl of March, and by the union of the heiress of the House of March with the heir of Edmund, fourth son of Edward III. created Duke of York, the right of succession, which was supposed to inhere in the descendants of the Duke of Clarence, was transmitted to the House of York, the youngest male branch of the House of Plantagenet. The title of the House of March had, in the reign of Richard, been expressly recognized in parliament; and it is rather extraordinary that Henry IV. never attempted to invalidate this popular claim, by procuring any formal act of repeal or renunciation; but that jealous and politic prince well knew how dangerous it might prove by such means to draw the attention of the public to a claim which, according to the ideas almost universally prevalent at that time, was founded on the most obvious and unalterable principles of justice. He adopted therefore another mode of proceeding, perfectly consonant to that profound sagacity which distinguished

guished every part of his political conduct. He procured a parliamentary settlement of the Crown on himself and his heirs male, which amounted to a virtual adoption of the Salique law, in a mode least obnoxious to the public censure, and which bade fairest eventually to extinguish the claims of the rival family; but this very artful, or to give it a more suitable appellation, this very wise measure, did not prove successful, for the Parliament which had enacted this important law, soon found the necessity of accommodating their own ideas, if indeed their ideas ever really coincided with those of the King, to the unconquerable force of popular prejudice, and of repealing an act which was highly beneficial to the public in its tendency; and which laid the best foundation for a permanent and durable settlement.

In the succeeding reign, the ridiculous pretensions of Edward III. which were absolutely relinquished at the Peace of Bretigny, were unfortunately revived by Henry V. who, in consequence of a remarkable concurrence of favourable circumstances, united to his own great talents, had nearly effected the final conquest of the French monarchy; but his death unexpectedly taking place in the midst of his triumphs, the fortune of the war was fatally reversed, and the English were at length dispossessed of all their transmarine territories, Calais alone excepted. Soon after the termination of this second violent and iniquitous attempt to deprive the House of Valois of its just rights,
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that fierce and implacable contest between the two rival houses commenced, which did not cease till the Earl of Warwick, last of the name of Plantagenet, had fallen a victim to the jealous and cruel policy of Henry VII. and till, by a final union of claims in the person of Henry VIII. there no longer subsisted any ground of competition. Since the accession of that monarch three centuries have nearly elapsed, and throughout that long period it must be acknowledged that no sensible inconvenience has arisen from adhering to the established order of succession, but this certainly is not to be ascribed to any extraordinary degree of political wisdom or foresight, but to a certain happy influence, whether natural or providential, which seems, with few intervals or exceptions, from that time to have diffused itself over almost all the public and national concerns of this country; and a very slight survey of modern English history will suffice to prove the truth of this assertion. Previous to the divorce of Henry VIII. from Catharine of Arragon, the Princess Mary, afterwards Queen, was the undisputed presumptive heiress of the English Crown, in consequence of which the disposal of her in marriage became a matter of the utmost importance to the nation. Overtures on this subject were at different times made, both by France and Spain, which were happily rejected, and though, on her accession to the throne, the liberties of the kingdom were exposed to the most imminent danger by the matrimonial

trimonial connection she then formed with Philip II. as she fortunately died in a few years without issue, the evils which threatened the nation were for this time averted. The reign of Elizabeth was distinguished by an almost uninterrupted solicitude in the parliament and people, with regard to this subject; a solicitude which displayed itself in applications to the Queen, continually repeated, to form such a matrimonial union as would most effectually secure the public happiness; and though the Queen firmly and magnanimously resisted these solicitations, with a view no doubt, in the first place, to maintain her own authority and independency entire, and in the next, eventually to effect an union of the two British Crowns, which was apparently a favourite if not a primary object with that great Princess, yet in some critical moments of her life, reasons of state seemed to influence her conduct less than motives of a very different nature; and it is certain that the Duke of Anjou's accomplishments made so deep an impression on the Queen's heart, that she resisted with difficulty the importunity with which he urged his suit. The violence of the Duke's subsequent conduct plainly evinces the risque which must have been incurred had he met with success, of which indeed the nation at the time was fully sensible. To pass over some of the succeeding reigns, it is obvious to remark, that if the King and Parliament had not interfered as to the disposal of the two daughters of the Duke
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of York, afterwards King James II. the most fatal consequences might have ensued. Even posterior to the Act of Settlement, it is worthy of observation, that had our late venerable monarch died before marriage, the Crown of England would have devolved upon Sophia Dorothea, Queen of Prussia, mother of the illustrious Frederic, and how the English nation would have relished such a plan of government as those great political reformers the Prussian Hussars might have established amongst us by this time, it is scarcely worth while to examine. What I mean upon the whole to infer from this slight review of facts is this, that it is a most dangerous error in politics for a country, which like England boasts of a constitution founded upon the basis of liberty, in any circumstances to admit the right of females to succeed to the Crown. It is a matter of small moment indeed to the inhabitants of France or Spain, whether the sceptre remains in the hands of a Prince of the House of Bourbon, or whether it is suffered to pass into another and a foreign family; as political happiness amongst them depends almost entirely upon the personal disposition and genius of the Monarch, they seem to stand a nearly equal chance of attaining it, whatever family may happen to acquire possession of the throne; but in this kingdom, whose maxims of policy differ so widely from all others, it is of the utmost importance that the House of Brunswick should
continue

continue to sway the British sceptre. The title of the Princes of that House to the Crown, rests entirely upon parliamentary authority. They owe a debt of gratitude to the nation at large, which can never be obliterated. The ancient royal House of Stuart was deposed and banished, and a very considerable number of Princes, who stood prior in the order of succession, were excluded, in order to clear the path to the throne for them. They have not scrupled frequently to express the sense they entertain of these obligations in their public declarations, and to acknowledge that it is incumbent upon them in return, to maintain the free and happy constitution of this government sacred and inviolate; and it must be allowed, that though in the course of an administration of near eighty years, their conduct in some instances has justly been thought liable to exception, yet upon the whole, and to speak in general terms, they have acted in a manner worthy of their professions, and of the distinguished stations they have filled, as placed at the head of the most powerful community of free citizens which, since the fall of the Roman Republic, the world has ever known. It would be a dangerous experiment, and such as I believe the heart of every Englishman would revolt against, to permit the Crown to be transferred to another family, deeply tinctured perhaps with foreign prejudices and arbitrary principles, whilst there may be numerous branches
subsisting

subsisting of the present illustrious race of Princes, who born and educated in this country would glory in the name of Briton. It may be asked, What probability is there that such an event should ever take place? I answer, the probability is not so distant or ideal as may be generally imagined, considering the great increase of the Royal Family since the accession of his present Majesty; for were the marriage of the Prince of Wales to take place, and were daughters only to arise from such marriage, according to the present law of succession the eldest daughter of his Royal Highness, in whatever part of the world she might be settled, or to what Prince or private subject soever she might be united, without an express act of exclusion, would become Queen of England. It is easy to imagine a variety of similar cases, by which the imperial Crown of these realms might be transmitted from family to family, as private estates are seen to do every day under the operation of the same general law of inheritance. In order to establish an effectual remedy for this great political defect in our constitution, I would humbly propose a revival of the wise and salutary Act of Henry IV. a new Act of Settlement, limiting the succession of the Crowns of Great Britain and Ireland to the heirs male of his Majesty now reigning; and this must be allowed to be a juncture peculiarly favourable to such limitation, as it is not in any degree probable that the Princesses of
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the Royal House now living can receive any injury from it; and he must be a very scrupulous politician indeed who should found an objection against a measure so beneficial, upon the loss which may be eventually sustained in consequence of it by persons yet unborn. Indeed, my recollection does not suggest to me any objections which have even a colour of plausibility; but as weak arguments are entitled to some degree of regard, when more forcible ones are not to be found, it may perhaps be worth while to bestow a moment's attention upon these that follow, which are the best I am able to frame in this case.

1st, It may be said, that as the monarchy has subsisted so long, and flourished so greatly under the present form, it would be rash and unadvisable to make important innovations upon speculative considerations; at least, as there is no immediate prospect of danger, there can be no immediate necessity for alteration. In answer to this vague and general objection I do not hesitate to acknowledge, that the monarchy has long subsisted and flourished, notwithstanding that great defect in its constitution which I have pointed out; but what then? Are we entitled to infer from this acknowledgment that the defect in question has been productive of no inconvenience to the State? far from it. We know that the long and bloody contests between the two great rival Houses
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of York and Lancaster originated from this source. We know that since the termination of those fatal divisions, we have at various times, and in divers instances, been exposed to the most imminent danger by an absurd attachment to the same antiquated and impolitic maxim. We know that by an obstinate adherence to it, the Crown may, in the space of a very few years, be transferred from the present Royal Family into the possession of a Prince who may be an utter stranger to our laws, language and constitution, in which case the native Princes of the House of Brunswick would no doubt become the objects of his perpetual jealousy, hatred and persecution; and these surely are sufficient grounds for adopting a regulation, which appears equally favourable to the grandeur of the monarch, and the felicity of the people. "But there is no immediate danger, therefore no immediate necessity." What! are we to wait till the danger becomes imminent, and perhaps irresistible, before we attempt to apply the remedy? Does the physician delay the application of the medicine till the very moment that he expects the return of the paroxysm? In political as in private life the feelings cannot be set in opposition to the understanding, without experiencing a very sensible inconvenience; if, according to the dilatory maxims of these cautious politicians, we were to abstain from applying a remedy till the danger became near and pressing, and a bill of exclusion, or
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some measure equally violent, was then to be proposed, it is evident that the feelings of the people would be powerfully interested in favour of the particular individual against whom that particular measure should be directed; and it would certainly be regarded as a species of personal injustice, to which the most important considerations relative to the public welfare would scarcely be thought to give a sufficient sanction.

But, 2dly, It may possibly be objected by some, that the perpetuation of the royal dignity in the same family must have a tendency to impress upon the minds of the people a superstitious awe and veneration for the person of the monarch, and ultimately to revive and foster the long exploded notions of indefeasible right, passive obedience, non-resistance, and that long train of absurdities which seems naturally to flow from the idea so readily embraced by the vulgar, that the person of the chief magistrate is in some peculiar sense sacred and inviolable. I answer, that though I am disposed to pay every degree of respect to an objection which appears to arise from a jealous attachment to the cause of liberty, this apprehension seems to me so very far fetched and fanciful, that it can scarcely be deemed entitled to a serious answer. Would the objector really be willing to incur all the inconveniencies so obviously resulting from a transfer of the Crown to a new and foreign family, for the possible advantage

vantage of fortifying the minds of the people against Tory prejudices? If so, he is a bold speculatist indeed. But what probability, or possibility I might say, is there, that arbitrary principles can ever become prevalent, whilst this kingdom continues under the government of a race of Princes who must necessarily found their authority upon the basis of civil and religious liberty? The Revolution is an event which can never be forgotten in the annals of English history; and as long as the memory of it is preserved, so long must it be felt and acknowledged, that the genius of our constitution is irreconcilably at variance with the spirit of despotism. It is well known to be an established maxim of our Government, that the King can do no wrong; and a wiser maxim no Government ever adopted. Now, arguing upon the principles which an over-anxious caution might suggest, how easy would it be pompously to declaim against the political absurdity and dangerous tendency of this maxim! yet we see that it is regarded as a mere political fiction, that no inconvenience in fact results from it; but on the contrary, that it is productive of very signal advantages. So if an uninterrupted succession of princes of the present illustrious family were to fill the British throne for centuries to come, there is no room to apprehend that the doctrine of an indefeasible hereditary right would receive the least countenance from it. Public utility would

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sufficiently

sufficiently account for the establishment of the general law, and where mankind are allowed perfect freedom of investigation, it is impossible that any well-founded rational sentiment, universally received, can ever be superseded by an opinion at once false, absurd, and ridiculous.

E S S A Y VII.

On the Connection between VIRTUE and HAPPINESS.

I N one of the admired discourses published some years since by a celebrated Professor of Rhetoric, we meet with the following passage: “ Un-just are our complaints of the promiscuous distribution made by Providence of its favours among men; from superficial views such complaints arise. The distribution of the goods of fortune indeed may often be promiscuous, that is, disproportioned to the moral characters of men; but the allotment of real happiness is never so.” Now I confess that such a view and representation of human life as this, appears to me no better than a romance; and I am at a loss to conceive what good purpose can be answered by attempting to disguise the real truth, especially when it lies so open to every man’s experience and observation. In order to form any just conclusion, the preacher indeed tells us, that “ we must have a faculty by which we can look into the inside of hearts;” but as I presume the learned Professor does not mean to intimate that he is exclusively endowed with any such power, I think myself at

full liberty to argue from the usual data; and, notwithstanding the peremptory tone of this decision, I will venture to affirm, that according to the most accurate observations I have been able to make on human life, Virtue and Happiness are not inseparably united; that when they are found in actual union, it seldom happens that the degree of Happiness enjoyed by any individual bears an exact proportion to the degree of Virtue he possesses; and in no instance perhaps is that precise degree of Happiness the sole and necessary result of the virtuous principle. It may be thought that these are very dangerous concessions, such as tend to weaken the interests of Virtue, and if generally received, to discourage mankind from the practice of it; but I have myself no idea that the interests of Virtue can ever be promoted by deserting the interests of truth, nor do I admit that any truth can be stiled dangerous, if exhibited in a just light, and in its proper connection. If weak and erroneous arguments are employed to induce men to become virtuous, it seems to me a real service to the general cause of Virtue, to expose the fallacy of them, and to erect her empire upon a firm and permanent basis. A man who enters life under a persuasion that Virtue and Happiness are inseparably united, and that Happiness bears a certain and determinate ratio to Virtue, and who forms a resolution of leading a life of Virtue upon so narrow and selfish a principle, will find the ground upon which he stands
very

very unstable and slippery; and when that persuasion is once shaken, which will infallibly happen from a more enlarged acquaintance with the world, he must be in imminent danger of apostatizing from those principles and resolutions upon which he proposed to regulate his conduct. In attempting to ascertain the importance of a virtuous conduct and disposition, we must proceed upon one of these three suppositions:—First, That it is absolutely certain, mankind are destined for a future state of existence, and that their happiness or misery in that state will bear an exact proportion to the degrees of moral excellence or depravity to which they have arrived in the present life.—Secondly, That it is not certain that this will, but only probable that this may, be the case; and the degree of this probability may be infinitely varied in the apprehension of different individuals, according to the different light in which they may happen to view the evidences of this great truth.—Or, Thirdly, That there is no evidence whatever of a future state, and that death will certainly put a final period to our existence. Upon the first of these suppositions it would be very superfluous to multiply arguments to prove that it is our highest interest to adopt that mode of conduct which is best calculated to secure our happiness throughout the endless duration to which we are destined. On the second supposition also it must be allowed, that extreme folly only can possibly induce any man to deviate from the paths

of Virtue, if there only remains a mere probability that by such deviation his future and everlasting interests may be essentially affected. Of this, therefore, I may spare myself the trouble of adducing any formal proof; but upon the third supposition, it becomes a very nice and curious question indeed, how far it is the interest of a man to adhere inviolably, and in all circumstances, to the undeviating line of rectitude. In the general, I think it cannot possibly be doubted by any one, that Virtue is more favourable to Happiness than vice; but I should regard myself as undertaking an arduous task, if I attempted to persuade a man whose views extended no farther than this life, that his highest happiness depended upon his scrupulously conforming to the dictates of a pure and perfect morality. I should expect him to reply, if he spoke the language of his heart, "I am sensible that it is my interest to adhere to Virtue in the main, *i. e.* so far as my reputation in the world is at stake, so far as is necessary to restrain my passions or sensual indulgences within the bounds of moderation; in a word, I know it is my interest to preserve a sound mind in a sound body; but still there are exceptions to a plan of perfect rectitude, which it is also my interest to take advantage of: for instance, I hold an office of public trust, and I have an opportunity of embezzling large sums without the possibility of a discovery. By my personal attractions, I am enabled to captivate the affections of
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the fair, and at once to gratify my vanity and amorous inclination. I value myself upon my spirit and courage, and skill in the use of weapons, and if honour calls me to the field, and my antagonist should happen to fall, the pleasures of revenge, it must be owned, are exquisite." I should be glad to know what reply it would be possible to make to a man who should think, talk, and act in this manner; it would evidently be wholly fruitless, and even ridiculous, to attempt to make any impression upon him by expatiating upon the native beauty and excellence of Virtue; upon its utility in promoting the general interests of mankind; and upon the conscious satisfaction which would result from the love and practice of it. This would be to use a language which he could not comprehend. The idea of Virtue, abstractedly considered, for such a man, has no charms. The advancement of general Happiness is to him a matter of perfect indifference, and instead of a conscious satisfaction in the practice of Virtue, he is conscious only of a fixed and unconquerable reluctance to conform to its dictates. Such a man has no relish for the refined pleasures of the moral sense, and it cannot be denied that he adds to his Happiness by indulging, to a certain degree at least, all his vicious propensities. How is this then consistent with the hypothesis, that the allotment of Happiness is never disproportioned to the moral characters of men? But perhaps it may be said, that this is not a fair statement of the case, and

that all which is meant by recommending Virtue as the true source of Happiness is, that it will certainly be found so by those in whom the moral sense has been early and diligently cultivated, whose modes of thinking and habits of acting have been pre-disposed from infancy in favour of Virtue, and in whom the benevolent affections flourish in full life and vigour; and I certainly do not take upon me to affirm, that the world affords not any such examples. I am sensible, that the faculty of association is of a nature at once so powerful and so flexible, that by an early and skilful direction of it, it is very possible such an ardent and disinterested love of Virtue, such a noble and animating principle of benevolence, may be generated in the soul, that, leaving the very idea of a future state out of the question, all the allurements of vice united would, to a man actuated by such exalted sentiments, appear contemptible in comparison of the pleasures to be derived from Virtue; but then it is evident, from the nature of the case, that this must be a very rare and singular instance, almost amounting to a prodigy; and that a few such examples are by no means sufficient to establish the truth of the general maxim, that the virtuous are happy in proportion to the degree of Virtue they possess, nor indeed is it necessarily to be inferred that a man such as we have in contemplation, who has arrived to the highest degree of perfection of which humanity is capable, must be therefore eminently happy, but only that he would, in consequence of
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the exquisite delicacy of his moral feelings, incur a greater degree of misery by any occasional deviation into vice, than by a resolute adherence to Virtue, whatever personal inconveniences might result from the practice of it. Indeed, from the very nature of Virtue, it is easy to demonstrate that it cannot, in all situations and circumstances, be the interest of individuals invariably to adhere to it; for the essence of Virtue consists in regulating our conduct by such principles as are best calculated to advance the general Happiness. Now as it frequently happens that the Happiness of the individual stands in direct opposition to that of the public, it is the perfection of Virtue in individuals, in such cases, to sacrifice their own Happiness to that of others; but if we do not advert to that recompence of reward of which a future state of retribution affords us a prospect, how can such a sacrifice be rationally expected, or indeed how can it be rationally made? Here then is the grand, the remediless defect of that system of morality which extends not its views beyond the present life. Self-love and social are not the same, *i. e.* are not necessarily connected; and this defect becomes only the more apparent, from every attempt to palliate or disguise it, or to substitute any other principle in the place of that just, solid, and permanent foundation of human conduct, a regard to our own true interest.

The most celebrated sect of heathen philosophers, I mean the Stoics, it is well known, preposterously

posterously endeavoured to establish a system of perfect Virtue upon the basis of pride. By an inflexible adherence to her most rigorous dictates, they boasted, that they not only acquired an elevation of mind far superior to the base and ignoble vulgar, for whom they did not pretend that this system was calculated; but that they were raised to an equality with the Gods themselves. They even asserted, that Virtue was not only the chief good, which their rivals, the Peripatetics, were content to maintain; but that it was the sole good; and that the truly virtuous man must necessarily be supremely happy in the enjoyment of that good in all possible situations and circumstances, even whilst actually burning in the brazen bull of Phalaris. But philosophers of modern times, to do them justice, are not chargeable with any such excess of virtuous extravagance. Mr. Hume, who throughout his Treatise on Morals argues upon the supposition, that the present life includes the whole of our existence, is extremely embarrassed with this difficulty: he cannot indeed avoid touching upon it, but he takes care to do it as gently and cautiously as possible. It is remarkable, that, like the fashionable preachers of the present day, he paints Virtue in the most charming colours. "Nothing appears," to use his own language, "but gentleness, humanity, beneficence, affability. She talks not of useless austerity and rigours, suffering and self-denial: she declares that her sole purpose is to make her votaries,

“ votaries, and all mankind, during every instant
“ of their existence, if possible, cheerful and
“ happy; nor does she ever willingly part with any
“ pleasure, but in hopes of ample compensation
“ in some other period of their lives. The sole
“ trouble which she demands is, that of just calculation, and a steady preference of the greater
“ happiness.” This is a most pleasing picture of
Virtue, and who, without reluctance, can dispute
the justness of the resemblance;—it is however, like
most other portraits of great artists, a flattering
likeness. Truth and falsehood are indeed so art-
fully blended in this description, that some degree
of attention is necessary in order to separate them.
“ The sole trouble which Virtue demands is, that of
just calculation;” but upon what data is this calculation to be founded? Upon the supposition of a
future state? Then Virtue ceases to be that smiling,
gay and enchanting goddess described by
Mr. H. She assumes another countenance, not
indeed destitute of beauty, but of a severe and
awful kind; her deportment is martial, and her
air majestic; not a Venus, but a Minerva, armed
with helmet, spear, and shield. In plain language,
we cannot become really and truly virtuous at so
cheap a rate as such flattering representations
would seem to indicate. It requires great faith,
great fortitude, great resolution, and, however
unpleasant the words may sound in our ears, great
suffering and self-denial, to attain to any very superior
degrees of Virtue. The grand maxim which
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we are invariably to keep in view is, that we are absolutely prohibited to gratify, in a single instance, our own interests, passions, or inclinations, whenever they are in the remotest degree repugnant to the general happiness; and, on the other hand, that it is incumbent upon us, by all possible means, to promote the general welfare, and even to sacrifice ease, fame, fortune, and life itself, whenever they come in competition with those far superior considerations to which Virtue exacts an absolute and unreserved submission. But the virtue which Mr. H. means to recommend, is of a very different complexion—it is, indeed, but another word for pleasure: for according to his principles of calculation, it is sufficient to strike a balance here, and to give the preference to that mode of conduct which shall be productive of the greatest sum of happiness to each individual in this world; for he is equally ready with Macbeth “to jump the life to come.” He is, it must be owned, well enough inclined to persuade his readers, that the personal happiness of each individual coincides with the general happiness of mankind: but as this is a delicate point, he does not chuse to expatiate at large upon it; though a little to preserve appearances, as he cannot wholly avoid taking notice of the objection, he thinks it necessary to give us a sort of answer, but one so trifling, evasive, and unsatisfactory, as must serve to corroborate and enforce this formidable objection, instead of tending in any degree to alleviate the weight of it.

it. "If," says he, "a sensible knave alledge, that
" though, as a general rule, it must be acknow-
" ledged, that honesty is the best policy; yet it is
" a rule liable to many exceptions; and he must
" be allowed to conduct himself with most wisdom,
" who observes the general rule, and takes ad-
" vantage of all the exceptions. If a man thinks
" that this reasoning much requires an answer, it
" will be a little difficult to find any which will to
" him appear satisfactory and convincing: if his
" heart rebel not against such pernicious maxims,
" if he feels no reluctance to the thoughts of vil-
" liny or baseness, he has indeed lost a consider-
" able motive to virtue, and we may expect that
" his practice will be answerable to his specula-
" tions." Now I acknowledge, without a blush,
that I am one of those who think this reasoning
very much requires an answer; and yet I hope
my heart rebels against such pernicious maxims as
strongly as Mr. Hume's: but surely the proper
question in this case is, not in what manner the
feelings of men educated in strict habits of Virtue
would prompt them to act? but, whether the objec-
tion is really well founded, and what influence a
system of morals liable to such an objection would
produce upon the sum of human life and happi-
ness? Mr. H. seems to admit the objection to be,
strictly speaking, unanswerable; but endeavours
to raise a feeble barrier in support of Virtue, by
opposing to its attacks certain mental feelings and
associations which are known to be accidental,
variable,

variable, and factitious. "Those who are destitute of these feelings," says he, "have undoubtedly lost a considerable motive to Virtue." This is too true;—but then, Sir, I maintain, that they stand the more in need of some other motive less flexible in its nature, and more general in its operation;—but this the philosophy of Mr. Hume does not supply. Upon his principles, Virtue must depend upon *Honour* for her very existence. Honour is indeed "a sacred tie, the noble mind's distinguishing perfection!" but if we imagine that mankind will ever be greatly or generally influenced by a principle so refined and ideal, we indulge a groundless and romantic expectation. To banish the belief of a future state from a system of morality, would lead to consequences as dangerous and fatal as a total abolition of penal laws would produce in the framing, or new modelling, a plan of civil polity. And if a man presumed to hint his apprehensions, that the interests of Virtue might suffer in consequence of such general abolition or exclusion, would it be deemed very satisfactory for a moral philosopher, as he might please to stile himself, to stand up and say, "That, in his opinion, the native charms of Virtue were such, that she needed not the addition of legal sanctions;—that if any persons had been influenced by those sanctions, they had, indeed, lost a considerable motive to Virtue, and we might expect that their practice would correspond with their speculations; but that men of ingenuous minds
" had

“ had an antipathy to vice too strong to be counterbalanced by any views of temporal advantage ;
 “ and if they were not responsible for their actions
 “ to God or man, yet peace of mind, consciousness
 “ of integrity, and a satisfactory review of their
 “ own conduct, were circumstances very requisite
 “ to happiness, and would be cherished and cultivated by all who felt the importance of them*.”
 Notwithstanding this fine harangue, I am inclined to think that the necessity of restoring these faculties would soon become apparent, and even the philosopher himself be compelled to acknowledge the necessity in this, as in many other cases, of making “ the lofty head of Speculation bow to “ groveling Experience !”

The narrow limits of a slight Essay do not permit me to pursue this interesting investigation farther ; but enough, I hope, has been said to establish, upon a solid foundation, the following conclusions :

First, As it is a truth which cannot, so it is a truth which needs not, to be concealed or palliated, that Virtue is not necessarily productive of, or connected with, temporal Happiness. “ *Dies deficiet,*” says the Roman orator, “ *si velim numerare quibus bonis male evenerit : nec minus si commemorem, quibus improbis optime.*” To maintain, with the learned Professor whom I have already quoted, that we are happy in exact proportion as we are virtuous, is, in other words, to assert, with the ancient Stoics, that Virtue

* Vide Hume's Essays, vol. ii. p. 350.

is the only good, *i. e.* the sole source of our enjoyments;—an opinion so contrary to fact and experience, that it is wonderful any man can seriously attempt to defend it. Are the pleasures we receive from the senses to be entirely left out of the account? Are the pleasures of imagination nothing? Or, do we derive no addition to our happiness from our literary and intellectual pursuits? If the moral sense is carefully cherished and cultivated, it is indeed the source of a very sublime and exalted species of enjoyment. On some occasions, however, it is rather the source of pain than pleasure; and the more virtuous a man is, the larger sacrifices of private happiness he is disposed to make to the general good; so that it may well admit of a doubt, if he has no future reward in prospect, whether, upon the whole, his happiness would be promoted by an undeviating perseverance in a course of the most perfect Virtue to which a human being can attain. It should seem that Virtue of a lower standard, and mixed with a considerable portion of alloy, is better calculated for the purposes of this world merely. We see it passes every where current, and the acquisition of it is by no means difficult. To speak without a figure, I assert, that whatever we may suppose respecting a few sublimer spirits, the bulk of mankind, I mean those who are destitute of the finer feelings of Virtue, would certainly, in many instances, add to their temporal happiness by deviating from the strict line of rectitude; and I affirm, that there is no motive of a moral nature,

ture, but such as a future state furnishes, of sufficient force to deter such men from the practice of vice. Hope and fear are the two grand springs by which that curious machine, the human mind, is actuated; and to deprive Virtue of that support which she receives from their influence and operation, and to substitute in their room a sense of honour, or a love of moral beauty and order, is to betray the cause of Virtue. Secured by the awful sanctions of religion, the temple of Virtue stands unshaken upon a rock: but these, her false and pretended friends, would fain subvert that firm and solid foundation, and in lieu of it would erect an house for her upon the sand; but if I may be allowed to borrow the language of Scripture, "When the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon that house, it will inevitably fall, and great will be the fall of it." Hence,

2dly, It is most unquestionably certain, that religion is of essential use and importance in promoting the temporal interests and felicity of mankind.

Were the belief of a God, of a providence, and of a future state banished from the world, it is evident that morality would stand on a foundation totally different from that on which it now rests. We should no longer be under an obligation, *i. e.* we should no longer have any rational or sufficient inducement to sacrifice our own happiness to that of others;—every individual would have a separate and detached interest, which it would, in that

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case, be his highest wisdom to pursue, however contrary it might happen to be to that of his neighbour, or of the public. A principle of generosity might indeed deter some men from embracing opportunities of promoting their own happiness at the expence of others; but generosity would be a feeble restraint indeed upon the great majority of mankind, who, when the powerful feelings of remorse and fear were extinguished, would be little scrupulous in gratifying to the utmost extent every passion and inclination, however depraved and corrupt, which could, in their apprehension, conduce to their own personal enjoyment; and the more completely a man could divest himself of every virtuous feeling and sympathetic emotion, the more powerful in fact would be his inducement, the more it would be his interest, if one may be allowed to use an expression at which the mind revolts, to sacrifice the happiness of others to his avarice, his ambition, or his revenge. It must however be acknowledged, that the evidence which nature affords of the great truths of religion, scarcely amounts to probability: upon that probability, weak as it is, had we no better guide, it would nevertheless be our duty and our wisdom to act; but the truth is, that though in speculation it is impossible to deny that such a probability ought to influence our conduct as much as even a certainty, the impression made by it is so weak, that it has never been found to produce any general or permanent effect upon the hearts and lives of

of mankind. The human mind is so constituted, as to stand in need of a species of evidence amounting much nearer to moral certainty, in order to effect any great practical purpose. How invaluable an advantage then ought the Christian revelation to be deemed, which is so admirably adapted to the wants and wishes of man, and which exhibits the grand doctrines of religion in a light so just and clear; which enforces them by such solemn and alarming sanctions; and which confirms and establishes the truth of them by a chain of evidence the most astonishing, the most convincing, the most decisive. This religion has already produced effects highly favourable to the happiness of the human race; and those who are persuaded of its divine authority, have the firmest reliance that it shall finally rise triumphant over all opposition; and that the knowledge and beneficial influence of it shall, at length, cover the face of the whole earth, as the waters cover the sea.

E S S A Y VIII.

On GOVERNMENT and CIVIL LIBERTY.

PART I.

AN elegant modern writer, to whom the world is indebted for a striking, and, in some respects, a just view of the internal evidence of Christianity, has been pleased also, in a late volume of disquisitions, to communicate to the public his sentiments on Government and Civil Liberty, which, considering the present advanced state of knowledge relative to those topics, are really somewhat extraordinary. He allows that the subject has been much hackneyed, but he is induced to take up his pen, in order to expose and confute those "false and mischievous principles, which," he says, "have of late been disseminated with unusual industry, and are as inconsistent with common sense, as with all human society, and which happily require nothing more than to be fairly stated to be refuted." Who would not have supposed, from this preface, that attempts had been made to revive the exploded systems of Hobbes or Filmer, and that

that Mr. J^{ny}'s, moved with just indignation to see the simple and rational principles of Mr. Locke again called in question, after their authority seemed to be finally established by a prescription of almost a century, had determined to employ his eloquence and sagacity in their support. How great then must be our astonishment, when we discover that the principles which appear to Mr. J. so full of absurdity and mischief, and which disturb his mind with such alarming apprehensions, are no other than the principles of Mr. Locke himself, and of his most distinguished followers; and it is remarkable, that though in the opinion of Mr. J. they require no other refutation than to be fairly stated, they have been gradually gaining ground, not in England only, but through Europe, ever since Mr. Locke, in consequence of the ever memorable revolution, was employed in the very act of refutation referred to by Mr. J. —

The first of these monstrous positions is this: First, That all men are born equal. Here Mr. J. has the candour to make a voluntary concession. He allows that there is a sense in which it may be true; and if it means only, *that all men are equally born*, he will not take upon him to dispute the truth of it; and it must indeed be acknowledged, that if this is all that is meant, it does not seem to carry its own refutation along with it. Of this, however, Mr. J. is positive, that in every other sense it must be false, for some are born beautiful and healthy, and some with

bodies distorted and diseased; some with minds fraught with the seeds of wisdom and genius, others with those of idiotism and madness; some are born to affluence and honour, others to labour and poverty. Now how such persons can be said to be born equal, meaning, no doubt, in the instances specified, Mr. J. despairs, and I do not know who would not despair of being able to comprehend.—What a negligent writer was Mr. Locke not to advert to these common and obvious cases of inequality, and to content himself with restraining his meaning to one precise idea; which, as the greatest geniuses are liable to trifling oversights, does not seem to have occurred to Mr. J. but which may serve as a salvo for Mr. Locke, and as a proof that Mr. J. was a little too hasty in asserting, that the proposition would bear no other sense than that very ingenious one which he may justly claim the merit of pointing out. In short, I will venture to suppose, that by asserting the natural equality of mankind, Mr. Locke meant nothing more than to intimate, that all the distinctions of rank and power which prevail in civil society, are artificial distinctions; they are all founded upon the basis of public utility, and must invariably be considered as subservient to that purpose. Where is the man who has a right to say, I possess inherent authority; and what species of authority can that be which he does not derive from the community of which he is a member? and to that community he must consequently be responsible for the just and

and proper exercise of it. "But supposing," says Mr. J. "that they were all born equal, would this prove what is always intended to be proved by it, that they ought always to continue so?" Here Mr. J. seems to be chargeable with another trifling inaccuracy: instead of *always* intended, truth required him to say, *never* intended; and this amendment may supersede the necessity of an answer to the question, which he seems to put with some degree of triumph. Mr. Locke certainly never meant to infer from the natural equality of mankind, that civil and political distinctions were unlawful, or unjust; nor do I recollect the most distant intimation of such opinion in the writings of any of his disciples with which I happen to be acquainted. But Mr. J. perhaps thought, that as general rules admit of some exceptions, Mr. Locke's principles, in this instance at least, admitted of a better refutation by being unfairly, than even by being fairly, stated. But,

2dly, Another position, as monstrous as the former, is, That "all men are born free." This, Mr. J. affirms, is so far from being true, that the first infringement of this liberty is being born at all, which is imposed upon them without their consent, given either by themselves or their representatives. Now here I apprehend that this great politician falls into an error, similar to that which misled him with respect to the former position; for as in that case, by all men being born equal, he imagined nothing more could be rationally meant

than that all men were equally born, so in the present instance, by all men being born free, he seems to understand that all men are freely born; but though, in the former case, he would not take upon him to controvert the truth of the proposition when explained in that sober sense which he affixed to it, in the latter he strenuously denies, that even in this sense the position can seriously be defended, and takes much pains to expose the absurdity of it. "How can a man," he exclaims with a mixture of disdain and indignation, "be born free, who, during the first nine months of his existence, is confined in a dark and sultry prison, debarred from light and air, till at length by a habeas corpus brought by the hand of some kind deliverer, he is set at liberty. And what kind of liberty does he then enjoy? He is bound hand and foot, and fed upon bread and water for as long a period: he is afterwards placed in a state of the severest discipline, first under a nurse, and then a schoolmaster, both equally tyrannical in their several departments: in this state of slavery he continues, till he commences involuntary subject of some civil government, to whose authority he must submit, however ingeniously he may dispute her right, or be justly hanged for disobedience;—and this is the sum total of human liberty." Now though I have undertaken, unworthy as I am, to offer a vindication, or an apology at least, for Mr. Locke, and though his system is upon the whole that which I profess

profess to embrace, yet I do not scruple to acknowledge in the face of the world, that if Mr. Locke meant to assert, that man, by the constitution of his nature, has a free option whether he will be born or not, or that he can be considered, in any sense, as a free and independent being during his close confinement in that dark and sultry prison to which Mr. J. alludes, I must decline offering a single syllable in his defence: and if Mr. Locke was so ignorant as to suppose, that an infant is in a capacity to enjoy the free use of his limbs for some months after his birth, we must charitably impute it to the misfortune of his being an old batchelor, and of course but little conversant with children. As for nurses, schoolmasters, and we may add kings, Mr. Locke certainly did not mean to deny that they were all tyrants in their several departments; nor did he attempt to insinuate, that flogging would not be the probable consequence of resistance in the one case, or hanging in the other;—nay, he was far from denying that these punishments might be even justly dispensed;—all that he pretended to shew was, that the authority of the great and of the petty tyrant stood upon the same general foundation: that as there was no natural distinction between the scholars and the schoolmaster, so there was just as little between the monarch and his subjects;—as the schoolmaster was not born with an inherent right of flogging, so the monarch was not born with an inherent right of hanging, but that all were born equal and free, *i. e.* that no one man had
a right

a-right to assume a power of controuling, or of punishing another; but it did not follow, at least Mr. Locke did not seem to suspect that it followed, from thence, that it was not lawful or expedient for the community to invest certain individuals with different degrees of power, which they would be under an indispensable obligation, arising from the nature of the trust, to exercise for the benefit and advantage of the society to which they belonged, and to that society they must be ultimately responsible for the due and faithful execution of it.

3dly, We now proceed to the discussion of another shocking maxim; a principle false, mischievous, inconsistent with common sense, and subversive of all civil society, but a very favourite maxim notwithstanding with some well-meaning simple people, who are so much in the dark as to be totally incapable of discerning its pernicious nature and tendency: it is this: That "all government is derived from the people." There is, indeed, a sense in which Mr. J. admits even this maxim to be true. "It is true," says he, "that all government is so far derived from the people, that there could be no government if there were no people to be governed." This, it must be owned, is a most ingenious and happy explanation. How completely and dexterously is this pernicious maxim, upon which Mr. Locke, that blind guide, rashly placed so great stress, divested of its venomous quality! How unspeakable are the obligations of an author to a sagacious and
able

able commentator! According to the new interpretation of this famous maxim, a monarch derives his authority from the people exactly in the same manner in which a shepherd derives his power from his flock—if there were no subjects, there could be no king—if there were no sheep, there could be no shepherd. If the admirers of Mr. Locke could so far lay aside their prejudices, as to acquiesce in this interpretation, so natural and easy, how salutary and beneficial would be the consequences! All animosities and contentions respecting the theory and foundation of Government would be for ever precluded; for Hobbes, Filmer, and Mandeville themselves, would not have the effrontery to deny, that in this sense the axiom was unquestionably just; besides, the fame and reputation of Mr. Locke himself would be greatly advanced by this means; for at present his principles seem somewhat unfashionable. His admirers are numerous indeed; but then not many noble, not many mighty, are to be found amongst them; when once, however, those principles are discovered to be capable of so liberal an interpretation, kings and princes may be expected to vie with each other in doing honour to his memory: we may expect to see his works translated into the French tongue “*par ordre du Roi*,” and a statue erected for him at Constantinople by express command of the Grand Seignor.

But though I so clearly discern, and so freely acknowledge, the immense advantages which would result from a general concurrence in this admirable interpretation

interpretation, I cannot so far forget myself, and the character I have assumed as the apologist of Mr. Locke, as to admit that the proposition in question will bear no other sense than this. There is a sense, which I am inclined to believe was the sense intended by Mr. Locke, and which does not appear to me absolutely incompatible with common sense, nor, "*prima facie*," at least to carry its own refutation along with it. All government is derived from the people," *i. e.* all persons possessed of civil authority, whatever be the form of government, are to be considered as holding their offices actually, or virtually, in consequence of the choice or election of the people. In other words, Government is a trust delegated from some particular community to certain individuals, for the general good and welfare of that community. It follows, that when that trust is abused, the people have a right to resume it, and to provide for their own safety in whatever manner they shall deem most eligible. Now that there is some plausibility in this account, appears pretty evident, from this consideration: That if this is not the true origin of Government, it can have no origin at all; for to say that Government derives its origin from force, is quite beside the purpose. Mr. Locke is professedly treating of just, lawful, and equitable government. If any government chooses to found its authority upon force, that government in effect proclaims war against its own subjects; and resistance from that moment becomes not only lawful,

ful, but meritorious. For any government to pretend to derive its authority immediately from God, is to add impiety to folly. We know that God wills the general happiness; and Government is no otherwise an ordinance of God, than as it is calculated to promote the welfare of mankind; to plead "a right divine to govern wrong," is an absurdity which none can swallow but "fools as gross as ignorance made drunk." To refer Government ultimately to God, is the same thing as to refer it to general utility, which is the basis on which Mr. Locke endeavours to fix it. Submission to civil as well as parental authority, is indeed commanded in Scripture, without specifying any particular exceptions; certainly not because these general rules do not admit of exceptions, but because common sense is sufficient to point them out without the assistance of an apostolic canon. Mr. J. contends, however, that "whatever right of controul and resumption the people may possess, the exercise of this right is wholly impracticable from the very nature of Government; for all Government must consist of the governors, and the governed. If the people at large are the governors, who shall be the governed? All government is power with which some are intrusted to controul the actions of others; but how is it possible that every man should have a power to controul the actions of every man? This would be a form of Government in which all are governed by all; that is, in other words,

“ words, where there is no government at all.” How might it puzzle a plain man to reply to these elaborate and profound arguments, which seem so clearly to demonstrate that it is absolutely impracticable, in the nature of things, for the people to call their governors to account, and to punish them for mal-administration, if we fortunately had not plain matter of fact to appeal to in this case, and, in imitation of the immortal Chillingworth, who, on a well-known occasion, thought it sufficient, in answer to all that his antagonist could urge, to cry out, “ the Bible! the Bible! the Bible!” we may, in the present instance, content ourselves with exclaiming, “ the Revolution! the Revolution! the Revolution!”

Mr. J. proceeds to make the following very extraordinary declaration: “ I agree with these pretended patriots, that the people in every country have a right to resist manifest grievances and oppressions, to change their governors, and even their constitutions, on great and extraordinary occasions; whenever they groan under the rod of tyranny, they have a right to shake it off, and form a constitution more productive of liberty.” Amazing! Can it be Mr. J. who makes these assertions? Why, Sir, Mr. Locke himself never broached a more false, mischievous and dangerous doctrine upon the subject of Government than this. It contains indeed the very essence and quintessence of all that Locke, Molyneux, Priestley,

ley, and Price, have said upon this topic. Who could have thought that Mr. J. should be found, at last, to agree with these pretended patriots in this fundamental article of their political creed. It must be owned, indeed, that Mr. J. seems to agree with these pretenders to patriotism in this matter better than with himself; for at no greater distance than a page or two preceding this declaration, he peremptorily asserts, "that to submit
 " or be justly hanged for disobedience is the sum
 " total of human liberty; that it is utterly false that
 " the people have an inherent right of refusing the
 " Government, in case of oppression, and that the
 " exercise of this right, if they had any just claim to
 " it, is wholly impracticable." So that, upon the whole, we see that it is the deliberate opinion of Mr. J. with which he has judged it proper to acquaint the whole world, that the people possess a right which they have no right to possess, and that they may lawfully and properly exercise a power which they have no power to exercise. The observations also which Mr. J. makes upon the definition of the term *people*, are very sagacious, and he animadverts with the most just and pointed severity upon those men who audaciously assert,
 " That the peers of the realm, the representatives
 " of the nation, the pastors of the church, the
 " sages of the law, and the whole body of ma-
 " gistrates, do not come within the meaning of
 " the term: men who think that Solons and Ly-
 " curguses are to be found only in tin-mines or
 " coal-

“ coal-pits;” who descend into the bowels of the earth, not in search of wealth it seems, but of wisdom, and who have the presumption to imagine, with Polonius, that they “ can find where truth “ is hid, though it were hid indeed within the “ centre.” “ These are not the men,” says Mr. J. very cautiously and prudently, “ whom I should “ chuse to trust with unlimited power;” and, for my part, I cannot but think them the more dangerous, on account of the astonishing secrecy with which they disseminate their sentiments, and carry on their designs; insomuch, that I really did not know, or even suspect, that there were any such men in existence, till I was informed of them by Mr. J.: happy for us that his warning voice has sounded in our ears; “ Let no such men be “ trusted.” It is now high time to pass on to the Fourth Proposition, which Mr. J. undertakes to confute, and which also, when fairly stated, as he affirms, confutes itself: The proposition is this:

4thly, That all Government is a compact between the governors and the governed. Now it may be remarked, that as all the positions which Mr. J. has undertaken to confute, confute themselves when fairly stated, it would not have been good policy, by any means, in Mr. J. to aim at making a fair statement of them, which would of course leave nothing for him to do, he therefore indulges himself in a sort of liberty not unusual amongst authors of very high reputation: I mean
a liberty

a liberty of misrepresentation, by which contrivance he has acquired abundant scope for ingenious ridicule, as well as serious argument. Thus in the present case we may observe, that Mr. J. affects to consider Locke, and the rest of the pretended patriots whose principles he opposes, as maintaining, that at some remote period a formal agreement was actually entered into by the two contracting parties, by which the latter gave up part of their natural independence, in exchange for protection granted by the former; without which voluntary surrender no one man, or body of men, could have a right to control the actions of another; "but all this, says he, is a ridiculous fiction, intended only to subvert all government, and let mankind loose to prey upon each other." Mr. J. best knows what purpose this *ridiculous fiction* was intended to answer, for he is indisputably entitled to the honour of the invention. Those pretenders to patriotism who inculcate the doctrine of a political compact, mean by it nothing more, than that the relative situation of the governors and governed in every civil community necessarily partakes of the nature of a compact. There is an original, a virtual, an implied compact, subsisting between the two parties, and which must ever continue to subsist. The two grand conditions of this compact, and which constitute the reciprocity of it, are, on the one side protection, and on the other obedience. It is from the very nature of the case as essentially binding on the two parties

as if it had been executed with all the formalities of an agreement between two individuals. Obedience can never be due where protection is previously withdrawn; neither can protection be due where obedience is causelessly withheld. "But," says Mr. J. "compact is repugnant to the very nature of Government, whose essence is compulsion, and which originates always from necessity, and never from choice or compact; and it is the most egregious absurdity to reason from the supposed rights of mankind in an imaginary state of nature; a state the most unnatural, because in such a state they never did or can subsist, or were ever designed for." Now I confess, with great deference to the judgment of this profound statesman and politician, that in my simple apprehension, compact is so far from being repugnant to the nature of Government, that it is essential to the idea of an equitable and legitimate Government. If the essence of Government is compulsion, I should be glad to know in what the essence of tyranny consists: That a certain degree of compulsion must be exercised by every Government, in order to secure the salutary and beneficial purposes of Government, cannot be disputed; but it no more follows from thence that compact is inconsistent with or repugnant to the nature of Government, than it follows in the business of common life, that a master who is intitled to exercise authority over his servants, and in some instances to dispense punishments amongst them, is not at the

the same time obliged, *i. e.* bound by compact, expressed or implied, to protect them from injury, to provide for their welfare, and to treat them with every proper and requisite indulgence. The essence of Government is not compulsion, but protection; *i. e.* protection is the sole end and object of Government; compulsion is entirely subordinate to it, and is no otherwise justifiable or admissible than as it is capable of being made subservient, in some mode or other, to the advancement of that end.—Again, “Government,” says Mr. J. “originates always from necessity, and never from choice or compact.” If by necessity Mr. J. means only a political necessity, or an urgent and obvious want of some common bond of union, in order to maintain peace and order in society, I am far from disputing it; but then such a necessity is very consistent with such a virtual compact as Mr. Locke contends for; nay, it implies it; for this necessity is either only another term for public utility, or else it arises from, and is founded wholly upon it: therefore, if that Government which is founded upon public utility implies that certain conditions are to be observed, the Government that is founded upon political necessity implies exactly as much; the distinction is merely verbal. But if Mr. J. means by necessity lawless force, then the idea of a compact is indeed excluded; but it is to be hoped that Mr. J. does not mean to insinuate, that this is the foundation on which Government ought to rest. If any sovereign should presume to assert such

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a claim,

a claim, there is no other remedy than to oppose force to force. "If he has risen by force, then "force must pull him down." "But it is a most egregious absurdity," says Mr. J. "to reason from the supposed rights of mankind in an imaginary state of nature, &c." Now here I have again the misfortune to differ from this ingenious writer: for what he regards as an egregious absurdity, appears not to me any absurdity at all; but on the contrary, a very natural, easy and satisfactory way of analyzing the complex idea of Government, and of reducing it to its original principles. What should we think of a mathematician who should object to Sir Is. Newton's demonstration of the theory of gravitation, because it is ultimately founded upon a few self-evident axioms? With just as much reason does Mr. J. object to Mr. Locke and others, that their system is founded on certain supposed abstract truths. It is as true, that all men are born equal, as that all the parts are equal to the whole; and Mr. Locke is as much at liberty to argue from the former axiom, as Sir Is. Newton from the latter; and it is no more necessary for one philosopher to show that men ever actually existed in a state of equality, than for the other to prove that a whole was ever actually divided into parts. Mr. J. may perhaps think that both axioms carry their own refutation along with them; but Locke and Newton wrote for those who thought they both carried their own evidence with them. Few persons certainly will be found hardy enough, like Mr. J. to call

call in question the truth of the axioms themselves; though it must be acknowledged, that many have doubted the truth of the systems which have been built upon them.

The Fifth and last of these false, mischievous, and absurd propositions, which Mr. J. has for the benefit of mankind undertaken to refute, lest the refutation which arises from a simple statement of them should fail to produce universal conviction, is this: "That no Government ought to subsist any longer than it continues to be of equal advantage to the governed as to the governors." Mr. J.'s reason and understanding seem to suffer as rude a shock from this maxim as from any of the former. "If this proposition is adopted, and by advantage, wealth and power are to be understood, there is an end of all government at once; for the greatest share of these must be possessed by the governors: on this principle, therefore, the governed would have a perpetual right of resisting, and every Government ought to be dissolved at the moment of its commencement."

Here then Mr. Locke and his friends are reduced to a most perplexing and perilous dilemma; either they must submit to the disgrace of retracting one of their favourite and fundamental maxims; or, they must acknowledge that the theory they adopt leads to an absolute subversion of all Government, and authorizes and establishes, to use Mr. J.'s own words, "a system of anarchy." Now, if I can by any "fetch of wit," contrive to extricate Mr.

Locke and so many other great men from this desperate and forlorn situation, I shall undoubtedly acquire immortal honour, and erect for myself a monument more durable than brass; even the attempt will be praise, and of the very failure it may be said, "*Magnis excidit ausis.*" I will venture then to suppose, that when Mr. Locke, or any other writer professing his principles, asserted, that no government ought to subsist any longer than it continues to be of equal advantage to the governed as to the governors, their meaning might possibly be, not that the governed ought to possess wealth and power equal to the governors, but that those wise and beneficial purposes for which Government was instituted, ought to be extended no less to the governed than to the governors; that governors should act upon this just and equitable principle, that it is as truly incumbent upon them to provide for the ease, happiness, and security of the meanest class of rustics as of the highest rank of nobles; that if any individual entrusted with the powers of Government were so wanting in common sense or common decency as to profess "the enormous faith of millions made for one," if he could possibly be so ignorant of, or so far forget the nature of his office, and the obligations arising from it, as to suppose that his own personal aggrandizement, or the gratification of his ambition, his pride, or his revenge, were the objects for the sake of which his fellow-mortals, born his equals, entrusted him with power; or if

he demonstrated by his conduct that he regarded his subjects as abject wretches, not possessed of any natural rights; nor entitled to claim legal protection as the reward of legal obedience, then that government ought no longer to subsist; the compact is broken, and the obligations arising from it are dissolved; the people have a right to resume the powers of Government, and to chuse new Governors, who shall be better disposed or better qualified to fulfil the important duties of their respective stations.

This I humbly apprehend to be the best interpretation which can be put upon the false, dangerous, and destructive maxim which Mr. J. has taken such laudable pains to confute; and though Mr. J. may insist, that when thus fairly stated it confutes itself, I must take the liberty to allege in behalf of Mr. Locke, that our present happy Constitution and Government are founded upon this very maxim. The Government under whose protection and patronage Mr. Locke wrote, was established upon the ruins of a former government, which was not suffered any longer to subsist, because the mutual obligations arising from the compact between the governors and the governed, had sustained the most gross and flagrant violation; and though the new government was so imprudent as to make choice of a vindicator whose first principles and fundamental maxims are "false, absurd, and impracticable;" yet in one respect both

parties may be deemed eminently happy, that, notwithstanding these maxims and these principles lie so extremely open to confutation, they have never yet been, and, without the most distant pretence to inspiration, I will venture to prophesy that they never will be, *actually confuted*.

E S S A Y IX.

On GOVERNMENT and CIVIL LIBERTY.

PART II.

IN the former part of this Essay I have endeavoured to vindicate Mr. Locke's principles of Government from the formidable charges brought against them by Mr. J.: and as in my judgment that vindication was conducted with all the ability as well as gravity which the strength of the attack seemed to require, I hope I may now venture to consider those principles as being perfectly re-established; and I trust that the friends of Mr. Locke will the more readily excuse the liberty which I am now about to take with them, on account of the very seasonable aid and assistance with which, in a moment of such imminent danger, I was so fortunate as to sustain the credit and reputation of that great philosopher. I say, to excuse the liberty I am about to take; for my present design is, to point out and guard against certain unwarrantable and dangerous inferences and deductions which have, and frequently with the purest

purest intentions, been made from Mr. Locke's principles. And as the best things are liable to be perverted to the worst purposes, I should think myself happy if, by suggesting a few salutary hints or cautions, I could in any degree contribute to prevent the noble and generous maxims of that justly celebrated writer, so favourable to the liberty, dignity, and happiness of mankind, from being abused or made subservient to the vile purposes of faction, anarchy, or licentiousness.

I have now before me a very able pamphlet, published at the commencement of the late war with America, which bears the name of a most respectable man, who has equally and honourably distinguished himself in the different capacities of a divine, a philosopher, and a politician. The publication I allude to, in particular, contains very striking marks of wisdom and penetration: happy would it have been for this nation, had she listened to his voice, and been guided by his counsels; but alas, "the things that belonged to her peace were at that time hid from her eyes." There are, however, some general remarks on the nature of Civil Liberty prefixed to this publication, which were, I think, justly regarded as exceptionable by many zealous friends of Liberty, and which gave occasion to much animadversion at the time they first appeared, and upon which I now propose to offer some impartial strictures.

Liberty is a term of very comprehensive import, and the celebrated author I refer to, Dr. Price, chooses

chooses to consider it under four general divisions;
 —1st. Physical liberty; by which he means the
 principle of spontaneity. —2dly. Moral liberty;
 or, a freedom from the internal control or domi-
 nion of vice. —3dly. Religious liberty; or, a freedom
 from external constraint in matters of conscience;
 and —4thly. Civil Liberty; which he defines to be
 the power of a civil society or state to govern it-
 self by its own discretion, without being subject to
 the impositions of any extraneous will or power.
 It is very observable, that Civil Liberty, according
 to the definition here given of it, however just that
 definition may be when applied to a state or
 civil community, is not at all analogous to the
 other kinds of Liberty here enumerated, which are
 entirely of a personal nature; and it seems to me
 that the Doctor has greatly confused his argument,
 by not sufficiently attending to the distinction be-
 tween that species of Liberty which belongs to a
 state, and that which is the right of a simple indi-
 vidual. Civil Liberty in the latter sense is, accord-
 ing to the accurate definition of Archdeacon Paley,
 “the not being restrained by any law but what con-
 “duces in a greater degree to the public welfare;”
 but the restraints which the public welfare indis-
 pensably requires every government to impose, are
 so numerous and important, that it is very evident
 the Liberty of the individual must be extremely
 circumscribed, in comparison of that of the com-
 munity. I do not mean to enter into the
 question,

question, whether one state or community may lawfully exercise authority over another; or to what limitations such authority ought to be subject: all I pretend to show is, that Civil Liberty, considered as a personal right, is incapable of being enjoyed in that extensive and romantic sense for which Dr. Price seems to contend. I agree with Dr. Price then, that a civil society, as such, enjoys Civil Liberty, strictly and properly speaking, when it is not subject to the control of any foreign power; but when he afterwards takes occasion to affirm, that Civil Liberty, in its most perfect degree, can only be enjoyed by small states, where every member is capable of giving his suffrage in person, I confess I am perplexed and embarrassed. Is it the Liberty of the state, or of the individual, which the Doctor is here speaking of? Not of the state; because Civil Liberty, when applied to a community is, agreeably to his own definition, but another word for independency. Not of the individual; because every citizen enjoys Civil Liberty in its most perfect degree, who is subject to no other restraints than such as the public welfare, and consequently his own happiness, render necessary. In short, the Doctor seems to me here evidently to confound the most perfect degree of Civil Liberty with the most perfect mode of establishing and securing that Liberty. I as readily acknowledge as Dr. Price himself can do, that all just Government is derived from the people, and that their happiness is the sole end and object of it; but I cannot comprehend

comprehend how, under any form of government, the people can rationally desire or aim at any thing farther, than the full possession of Liberty as above described, and the best security which the nature of the case will admit for the continuance of it. If we apply these observations to the reasonings of Dr. Price, we shall find that he is chargeable with a gross error; he has confounded the Liberty of the people with the power of the people. If the enjoyment of Civil Liberty is, as Dr. P. asserts, and all allow, what every man has a right to claim, it must be of some importance to ascertain in what that Liberty consists. Dr. Price seems to imagine, that Liberty consists in a man's actually sharing in the powers of Government, either in his own person, or in the person of his representative. I maintain, that Liberty consists in a total exemption from all unnecessary restraint; and that power is no otherwise desirable than as it contributes to the security of Liberty. It is very certain, indeed, that a degree of power is absolutely necessary for the accomplishment of that purpose; and a Government administered by the representatives of the people is on this account, and on this account only, preferable to a despotic Government; because under such a Government there is a moral certainty that Liberty will be better promoted and secured. Civil Liberty is a natural indefeasible right; but no particular form of Government can pretend to stand upon such a foundation. Government is an institution for the benefit of the people governed;

governed; and that form of Government which best conduces to the advancement of public happiness, is the best government, whether it be monarchical; aristocratical, or democratical; and different nations, in different states of society, may require very different modes and forms of government. But if Liberty consists in a man's being his own legislator, then all forms of Government but that of a pure democracy are unlawful. But Dr. Price allows that there may be the best reasons for joining to a popular assembly an hereditary council, and a supreme executive magistrate; but what reasons can those be which will authorize a violation of the first principles of Liberty? For if perfect Liberty consists in a participation of the powers of Government, by a delegation to a body of representatives chosen for a short term, and subject to the instructions of their constituents; the establishment of an hereditary legislative council, invested with equal or nearly equal powers, must be a flagrant encroachment on Liberty, and the negative voice of a single individual upon the resolutions of the representative body must be absolutely irreconcilable with the faintest image of it. Again, if the essence of Liberty consists in a man's being empowered to give his suffrage on public measures, either personally, or by the intervention of a representative, then it follows, that those who do not actually enjoy this privilege, and who constitute a very great majority even in this country of freedom, are in a state of slavery; and the female

male sex in particular, not a single individual of which is allowed to exercise this right, has no more reason to boast of its Liberty in England, than in Persia or Turkey. If Dr. Price's definition of Liberty conveys the true idea of it, these objections will no doubt admit of a clear and easy solution; but as my imagination does not readily suggest this solution, I shall continue to think, till I am better instructed, that Dr. Price has been guilty of a radical error, in making Liberty to consist in power, and what is still worse, in a particular mode of exercising that power. But if Liberty consists in a total exemption from every species and degree of restraint, which the public welfare does not render necessary; then we may, with propriety, proceed to consider under what form of Government we may reasonably expect that this inestimable privilege will be best secured, and by what means it is most likely to be confirmed and perpetuated; and I acknowledge, without hesitation, that it is certain, Liberty will never be advanced to its just and proper extent under any other than a popular government; and—zily. That if it could be supposed possible, that Liberty, under the protection and patronage of some patriot king, such as the world never yet saw, should be established in the utmost extent which the public welfare and happiness would admit; it is equally certain that no dependence whatever could be placed on the permanent possession of it. Our experience of human nature does not permit us
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even to hope for such a succession of wise, just, and beneficent princes, as would effectually secure this system of Liberty from the danger of violation; therefore I allow, that a country under the absolute government even of a Lewis XII. or an Henry IV. may be said, in a sense not remote from truth, to be enslaved; even supposing that the forms of a free constitution were preserved, and that the blessings of Liberty were actually enjoyed. A nation which depends for the continuance of its political happiness, and the enjoyment of its civil privileges, upon the will of one man, is in a state of bondage, however mildly or beneficently the despot may exercise his authority. Nevertheless, this is the species of Government which Dr. Price deems preferable to that under which he has the misfortune to live. "If the persons," says he, "to whom the trust of Government is committed are chosen, for long terms, by a part only of the state, and if during that term they are subject to no control from their constituents, the very idea of Liberty will be lost, and the power of choosing constituents becomes nothing but a power lodged in a few, to chuse, at certain periods, a body of magistrates for themselves and for the rest of the community. And if a state is so sunk, that a majority of its representatives are elected by an handful of the meanest persons in it, whose votes are always paid for; and if, also, there is an higher will, on which even these mock representatives

“ representatives themselves depend, and that directs
 “ their voices; in these circumstances it will be an
 “ abuse of language to say, that the state possesses
 “ Liberty: and rather than be governed in such a
 “ manner, it would, perhaps, be better to be
 “ governed by the will of one man, without any
 “ representation; for a representation so degene-
 “ rated, could answer no other end than to mislead
 “ and deceive, by disguising slavery, and keeping
 “ up a form of Liberty, when the reality was lost.”

I presume I do no injustice to Dr. Price in supposing, that these reflections were intended to allude to the government and constitution of our own country; and however laudable the Doctor's intentions might be, I cannot regard them in a more favourable light, in fact, than as a libel upon that government and constitution. It is a gross misrepresentation, founded upon an egregious blunder. Dr. Price plainly mistakes, and confounds in this passage, as almost every where else, Liberty with power. Montesquieu truly affirms, that the power of the people, is not the Liberty of the people; but Dr. Price expressly argues upon the contrary supposition, and with him, Liberty is only another word for power. So far as the individuals of any community are admitted to participate, either personally or by representation, in the management and direction of public affairs, so far, and no farther, they are possessed of Liberty. If the truth of this position be admitted, Dr. Price may indeed, with some appearance of reason, brand the English con-
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stitution as a system of slavery. It is most certainly not the end or object of this constitution, to invest all the members of the community, or even a majority of them, with that species of power, and much less with that right of control, in which Dr. Price makes Liberty to consist; but it is the object of this constitution, so justly admired and celebrated, to secure all the salutary and beneficial purposes of government by the wisest and most effectual means.

By allotting to a popular assembly the principal share of legislative authority, the interests of the governors are inseparably blended with those of the governed; and thus, as Dr. Price himself observes, when a little off his guard, "it is impossible the represented part should subject the unrepresented part to arbitrary power without including themselves." By establishing another distinct hereditary body of legislators, consisting of men of the first rank, influence, and opulence, a firm barrier is preserved against the sudden and dangerous irruptions of democratic violence. Placed above the reach of vulgar prejudices, and free from the contagion of popular delusion, such an institution is calculated to add wisdom, stability, and dignity, to the measures of government; and the executive power is placed entire in the hands of a single individual, in order that the measures agreed upon may be carried into effect with vigour, promptitude, and facility; and this great executive magistrate is allowed a negative upon the resolutions

solutions of the other two branches of the legislative body, that he may be enabled to resist any encroachments which the lust of power inherent in human nature might induce them to make on his constitutional prerogative. For my part, I can never contemplate this singular plan of polity, and this admirable distribution of power, without emotions of rapture and astonishment! And when compared with the different forms of government which were adopted by the free states of antiquity, or those which at present subsist, its superiority is so manifest, that I cannot but regard it as a species of strange ingratitude for any man, who actually enjoys all the advantages resulting from it, coldly and sullenly to withhold his tribute of applause; and much more, with a kind of malignant pleasure, to magnify and expose those defects and blemishes which are inseparable from every human institution; and because it does not, in all respects, quadrate with that ideal plan of perfect Liberty, which a speculative statesman may frame in his own closet, to represent it in an odious and debasing light, as a system even more to be deprecated and detested than absolute despotism. Is it possible, might an enlightened foreigner exclaim with astonishment, who had seen and felt the dire effects of arbitrary power, that any such persons can exist? Yes, it is possible: and to increase that astonishment, he might be told, that these very persons were many of them men of the most distinguished moral excellence, men of the

most extensive philanthropy, of great learning, and of undoubted capacity; but who, inflamed with a romantic and impracticable idea of Liberty, were eagerly aiming to grasp a fleeting shadow, while they were in actual possession of the substance.

The grand enquiry, in short, is this: Does that renowned constitution of government under which we live, or does it not, secure to us the full and permanent enjoyment of those rights which we may justly claim in a state of civil society? Dr. Price, without hesitation, will answer in the negative; "for the persons to whom the trust of government is committed are chosen for long terms; they are chosen by a part of the people only; they are subject to no control from their constituents; and there is an higher will, on which even these mock representatives depend: so that the very idea of Liberty is lost, and it is an abuse of language to retain the term." Let Dr. Price, however, declaim as long and as loudly as he pleases, it still remains an incontestible fact, that from the era of the Revolution, when the key-stone was put to this "Arch of Empire," Liberty, both civil and religious, has been enjoyed by the inhabitants of these kingdoms, in a degree far superior to any thing known, or even imagined, in any former age or country. Under this government no sacrifice has been made, in any instance, of our fundamental rights; but, on the contrary, since that period they have received

ceived several very signal and important confirmations; nor do I discern the most distant symptom of danger at present. If I chose to oppose speculation to speculation, I would say, that the term of delegation seems to be a well-chosen medium; it is neither so long as to tempt the representative body to forget its dependence on their constituents; nor so short as, by frequent re-elections, to involve the kingdom in a perpetual scene of tumult and discord. I would say, that if the representative body is chosen by a part of the nation only, that part is sufficiently numerous to secure an inseparable union of interests between the representatives and the people at large, which is the only real use of representation. I would say, if the representatives, when chosen, were subject to no control from their constituents, that such an entire freedom from control was absolutely necessary to give dignity and efficiency to their proceedings; and that a body so chosen, was incomparably better qualified to judge what measures would most conduce to the public interests than the constituents themselves, and would be influenced by the very same motives to advance those interests to the utmost of their power; and that an appeal to the people upon every political question that might arise, would be productive of every species of faction, anarchy, and confusion. And as to the higher will, on which the representative body is supposed to depend, if it refers to the in-

fluence of the executive magistrate, I should not scruple to say, that, according to that theory of human nature on which every theory of Government ought to be founded, it seems to me absolutely essential to the firm and permanent duration of the constitutional authority of that magistrate, that he should possess a certain degree of influence over the legislative body. The constitution has indeed wisely given him a negative upon their resolutions; but whoever imagines, that, by virtue of that branch of his prerogative alone, he would be able to withstand the continual efforts by which a natural love of power would infallibly and insensibly incite that formidable body to assail or undermine his authority, is but little acquainted with either theory or fact. Interest must be opposed to interest; and the sole disposal of the honours and emoluments of the state, for this amongst other wise and important reasons, is placed in the hands of the supreme magistrate, that he may be enabled to check the irregular or exorbitant ambition of the legislative assemblies, by opposing the private interest of the individuals who compose it, to the public and collective interest of the whole body: and though it is impossible in this, as in a thousand other cases, to draw a precise line, and to say, with respect to the regal influence, thus far it ought to extend, and no farther; yet nothing can be more obvious, than that a total abolition of that influence would amount to nothing

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less than an absolute subversion of the constitution:

I hope, however, I am in no danger of being misunderstood. I am far from asserting, that the constitution has arrived at its ultimate point of perfection; but I own, I have an inveterate dislike to improvements merely speculative and theoretical. If a grievance can be proved to exist, let the most effectual remedy which human wisdom and prudence can suggest be applied to it,—and in this manner the constitution has, in fact, been gradually and insensibly formed; but of apprehensions and surmises, there is no end. We all know what the constitution is at present, and we all feel the beneficial effects resulting from it; but if innovations are continually made, in consequence of the specious speculations of bold projectors, who can say what it may at length be?

The plans actually proposed by some men of this class for strengthening and confirming what they are pleased to dignify with the name of Liberty, and the bulwarks and barriers which they would erect for her defence, seem to me to the full as romantic and visionary as the wall of brass with which it is pretended that Friar Bacon, by his magical power, proposed to guard the coasts of Britain. For my part, I own, I am better satisfied with those wooden walls by which we are at present defended, and with those securities, however

weak and feeble they may be deemed, by which our civil rights and Liberties have been hitherto preserved from injury, and by which, for ages to come, I trust, they will continue to be protected.

E S S A Y X.

On the STUDY of METAPHYSICS.

A Popular Essayist, whose compositions are well calculated for the amusement and instruction of a numerous class of readers, and whose real merit I am far from wishing to depreciate, has thought fit thus to express himself on the subject of Metaphysics: "For Metaphysics what can be said? If every book that has been written on them, and thousands have been written, were annihilated, not a single individual in the community of all mankind would, in any one respect, have just reason to lament the loss. Mathematical and arithmetical studies are speculative, it is true; but they do not terminate in speculation. The builder, the navigator, almost every mechanic art, is assisted by geometry; and all men, without exception, benefited by arithmetic;—but Metaphysics tend only to benight the understanding in a cloud of its own making—to lose it in a labyrinth of its own contrivance." If to deal in positive assertions, unsupported by even the shadow of a proof, and without the slightest acquaintance with the subject respecting

ing which the assertor ventures so boldly to decide, be to write dogmatically, we have, in the passage now quoted, as curious and complete an instance of the dogmatic style as I recollect ever to have met with. But this is not the only opportunity Mr. K—x has taken of expressing his dislike and contempt of all metaphysical discussions; to which, for my own part, I pay exactly the same regard as I would to the opinion of a blind man, who should take it into his head to declaim upon the inutility of the study of optics; or as Mr. K. himself would do to many a worthy citizen, who should declare his full conviction of the folly of wasting time upon the study of Latin and Greek. That branch of philosophy which is distinguished by the term “Metaphysics,” comprehends in it a variety of topics, some of which are the most refined and curious, and others the most interesting and important, which the human mind is capable of investigating; and what degree of knowledge respecting these points is really attainable, can no more be ascertained by a mere classical scholar, than the most illiterate clown can pretend to form a conjecture concerning the truth or importance of the Newtonian Theory. Mr. K. expresses his regret, that so much stress is laid upon the study of Metaphysics in the general plan of academical education; and yet it is difficult to say, if it is at all to enter into the general plan, how less stress could well be laid upon it. I differ so much from Mr. K. upon this subject, that I do not scruple to say, I wish much
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more stress was laid upon it. I firmly believe it would be productive of the happiest consequences. Those who have capacities at all adequate to the contemplation of subjects of this nature, and apply themselves to the study of Metaphysics early and methodically, I believe, almost invariably become deeply interested and engaged in the pursuit; and when a habit of attention to studies of this nature is once acquired, a point of the highest importance is gained. The magnitude and sublimity of these disquisitions have a manifest tendency to elevate the mind, to lessen in our estimation the value and importance of temporal pursuits; to inspire a certain dignity and superiority of soul; and, by the intimate relation they bear to religion, both natural and revealed, to make the most beneficial, as well as durable, impressions upon the heart. How is it possible to make that stupendous Being, who called the universe into existence, the subject of our frequent philosophical meditations, without feeling emotions of awe, gratitude, and devotion? Who can reflect without some degree of moral improvement upon that miracle of divine power and skill, the human frame? "What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how excellent in faculty!—in form and moving, how express and admirable! in action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a God!—the beauty of the world!—the paragon of animals!" Were it "to consider too curiously," to enquire whether that principle

ciple of intelligence and perception which raises us so high in the scale of existence, be the result of an exquisite arrangement of material particles? or, whether it is capable of subsisting independently of the corporeal frame to which it is at present united? Or is it possible to employ our thoughts and imaginations upon a subject of such infinite moment, without feeling our hearts glow with an animating hope that death may be nothing more than a change in the manner of our existence? Or, if the natural proofs of this grand fact be indeed deficient, how much importance does it add to that divine revelation, which, in the most unequivocal terms, asserts the doctrine of a future resurrection! — To say no more, who can contemplate the amazing extent and flexibility of the power of association, as explained and illustrated by Locke and Hartley, or the mechanical operation of motives in producing all our volitions, without being sensible of the unspeakable importance of attending to the early cultivation of the mind, and of inculcating, with all possible diligence, those laudable and virtuous principles which, so far as they are not counteracted by opposite influences, must operate upon the mind in a regular and definite manner? If Mr. K. cannot see the use or advantage of these speculations himself, I would advise him, at least, not to attempt to exercise his wit upon those that do; or affect to treat these topics as trifling or ridiculous. Why should any man, who happens to have no relish or capacity himself for these sublime researches,

researches, wish to deter others from employing all the powers and faculties of their minds upon these, as well as other subjects equally mysterious to the vulgar, what is difficult to explain, what is dark to illumine? While thus engaged, the mind feels its own weakness, it is true; but it feels its own strength and dignity too.

"Sure, He that made us with such large discourse,

"Looking before and after, gave us not

"That capability, and godlike Reason,

"To rust in us unus'd!"

I do not hesitate to assert, that a mere classical scholar, however polished his language, or refined his taste, in real elevation and comprehension of mind, is as much inferior to the man who has attained to an intimate knowledge of the writings of Locke and Hartley, who has converted the simple and admirable theory of those great philosophers to all those excellent practical purposes to which the latter, in particular, has so ably shewn they are capable of being applied; I say, to such a man, the mere classical scholar is as much inferior, as he is in his own estimation superior to the most ignoble of the vulgar. Dr. Akenfide, I remember, remarks, that it is hardly possible to conceive Philosophy and Taste at a greater distance from each other, than at the period of the Revolution, when Locke stood at the head of the one, and Dryden of the other. But if they must be considered as in a state of opposition, and the characters of Dryden and Locke are to be placed in the balance together, surely the "*bel esprit*,"
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in comparison with the philosopher, must appear as light as a peacock's feather weighed against an ingot of gold. I am far, however, from thinking an union between Philosophy and Taste impracticable. The writings of Cicero alone afford sufficient proofs, how susceptible the most abstract topics of philosophy are of the embellishments of imagination; and I cannot help remarking by the way, what an inexpressible charm, and what an addition of dignity, the character of Cicero derives from the anxious solicitude with which he pursued those researches, which the conductors of "Liberal Education" in our times affect to treat with ridicule and contempt. But though I would pay a superior regard to that which appears to me of superior excellence and importance, I do not deem lightly of the use or value of classical literature. I am not insensible to the exquisite beauties of those ancient writings, which are justly regarded as the most perfect models of literary excellence; nor am I a stranger to the refined pleasures to be derived from this source. In the present state of things also, classical learning is so intimately blended with every other species of knowledge, that the study of the dead languages is become a matter of indispensable necessity to those who entertain the remotest views of intellectual improvement. But what I regard as a just subject of complaint is, that classical literature is made too much an ultimate object. There are many men of good natural understandings, and who pass for what is generally called good scholars, who

who are, in fact, most deplorably ignorant. They seem to consider the attainment of the learned languages as the great end of life; and as that is the species of learning which is most serviceable in the acquisition of academical honours, it is too frequently thought all that is necessary; and a total ignorance of those sublime investigations, which open a new world to our intellectual view, is very easily convertible into a gross and stupid contempt of them.

In one of our universities, indeed, mathematical science engages a very great, and I think a very disproportionate share, of the general attention. It has been often asserted, that the study of Mathematics contributes to strengthen the judgment, to check the roivings of fancy, to fix the attention, and insensibly to infuse into the mind an habit of thinking accurately, and of arguing with precision, even upon moral and philosophical subjects. This is an opinion so plausible, that I do not wonder it should be favourably received; though I do not believe that there is any maxim more entirely destitute of foundation, or one which is less able to abide the test of examination and experience. If we consider the fundamental difference which subsists between mathematical and moral reasonings, I think we must acknowledge, that it is absolutely impracticable to transfer our ideas from the one to the other, so as to derive any advantage from the experiment. Nay, I will venture to affirm, that mathematicians have often been betrayed

betrayed into egregious absurdities, by attempting to introduce mathematical ideas into subjects where they are totally inapplicable. Would the famous Professor Wallis, for instance, if he had not been a mathematician, ever have exposed himself to general ridicule, by comparing the three personal distinctions of the Godhead to the three dimensions of a cube, and the Godhead itself to a cube infinitely extended? If the study of Mathematics contributes so much to bestow precision and accuracy in our reasonings on moral subjects, how can it be accounted for that Pascal, that prodigy of mathematical genius, should not have been able to discover the absurdity of the Popish doctrine of transubstantiation? And as the mathematics are much cultivated in the catholic countries, surely we might reasonably form a general expectation, that those at least who were eminently distinguished by their mathematical abilities, should be as remarkable for their freedom from vulgar prejudices. If their skill in geometrical science could be supposed to have any influence upon their general habits of thinking and reasoning, it is fair to infer, that they must at least be exempt from the grosser errors of the popular superstition; but it happens unluckily to be well known, that the Jesuits were not only the most able mathematicians, but the most deplorable bigots of modern times. In fact, moral truth, not admitting, strictly speaking, of demonstration, *i. e.* of a species of proof which consists of the regular and uninterrupted deduction
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of one self-evident proposition from another, bears no analogy to mathematical truth, and requires a totally different kind of support. In its attempts to investigate moral truths, the mind is perpetually occupied in the comparison of probabilities; and the man, whose attention has been solely engrossed by the contemplation of truths, supported by infallible reasoning, will be as much at a loss when he is called upon to estimate the value of opposing probabilities, as if he had been taken immediately from the loom, or from the plough; and if the appeal is made to real life, and actual observation, I believe it will almost invariably be found, that those who are distinguished by a strong predilection for mathematical pursuits, are the men whose views and sentiments upon other subjects are remarkably narrow and contracted, their reasonings confused and inconsequential, and their general habits of thinking illiberal and vulgar; such instances as, a slight acquaintance with the world will furnish, are sufficient to demonstrate, in opposition to the most specious speculations, that mathematical knowledge has not that tendency to enlarge the mind, or to strengthen the judgment, which many fanciful people are apt to imagine. Nevertheless, geometry is undoubtedly in itself a noble and important branch of science, and the elements of it, at least, ought to be well understood, by those who aspire to the praise of a liberal education; but I do not think that it is necessary, or proper, to make it a primary object

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with the generality of students, who usually enter upon the study with disgust, who are seldom desirous, or perhaps capable, of making such a proficiency in it as to derive any real advantage from it; and who not unfrequently, when they have once forsaken the walls of the College, insensibly lose, by neglect, the knowledge they had acquired by long and laborious application; or if it is retained, it produces no visible effect upon their general modes of thinking or acting. "We recognize immediately," says the author of the Rambler, "the philologist, the critic, the philosopher, or the man of taste; but years after years may elapse, before we discover that the man with whom we have frequent intercourse is an able mathematician." However important mathematical science may be deemed, as it relates to the community, with respect to such persons, it in fact terminates in speculation, which is the reproach Mr. K. wishes, though most unjustly, to fix upon the Study of Metaphysics; but this is not all: "Metaphysics," according to Mr. K. "tend only to benight the understanding in a cloud of its own making; to lose it in a labyrinth of its own contrivance." With regard to this charge, the question may not improperly be put to Mr. K. "Speakest thou of thyself, or of some other man?" Those who pay only a slight and superficial attention to any subject of an abstruse and recondite nature, are very willing, and find it very easy, to persuade themselves, that the

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cloud in which they are involved, necessarily arises from the subject itself; and are rarely inclined to suspect their own ignorance, incapacity, or prejudice. It must, however, be acknowledged, that Metaphysics cannot be wholly vindicated from the charge of obscurity; a certain degree of darkness and doubt hangs over all our investigations on these mysterious subjects; but we ought carefully to distinguish between that obscurity which arises from the nature of the subject, and which is necessarily connected with it, and the obscurity which arises from the want of a proper and adequate attention to the subject; and I am strongly inclined to suspect, that it is this latter species of obscurity, which by those who are most fond of declaiming against the Study of Metaphysics, is almost invariably mistaken for the former.

“Metaphysics,” Mr. K. further observes, “were once encouraged and cultivated, because they served the purposes of superstition. They involved theological subjects in a perplexity which the simple could never unravel. They gave an air of mystery and depth which caught the admiration of the vulgar. They are now employed in a similar manner in the service of infidelity. They have induced the half-learned and the conceited, those who think they understand them, and those who wish to be thought by others to understand them, to adopt, without being apprehensive of danger, opinions fatal to their own happiness, and to the existence of
O 2 “society.”

“society.” Notwithstanding the volubility and smartness of this declamation, I hope Mr. K. will not think he concedes too much in granting, that even in Metaphysics there is such a distinction as truth and falsehood; and that of two opposite opinions, if one is wrong, the other must be right; and, I presume, I may further be allowed to suppose, that the metaphysical notions to which Mr. K. alludes in the last paragraph, as having been productive of such extensive mischief, are in themselves false and erroneous. Now I should be glad to be informed how these false and dangerous metaphysical opinions, opinions which have produced effects so fatal to the happiness, and even to the existence of society, can ever be properly and satisfactorily confuted, but by metaphysical arguments? Certainly, just and rational sentiments in Metaphysics must be serviceable to the general cause of virtue and happiness, in exactly the same proportion that the false and absurd opinions to which he refers are prejudicial and dangerous. No doubt the Study of Metaphysics may, in particular instances, have produced an unhappy effect upon the minds of the half-learned and conceited; upon those whose capacities were unequal to the discussion of subjects of this nature, or upon those who engaged in the pursuit of them with previous corrupt and vicious propensities. The study of theology is likewise liable to the same objection; but what then? To borrow the noble and decisive argument of Hamlet, “If the sun breed maggots
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"in a dead dog," is that glorious luminary there-
 fore to be reproached? The interests of truth,
 virtue, and happiness, are inseparably connected;
 and if Mr. K. thinks that any particular opinions
 in Metaphysics are unfavourable to virtue and hap-
 piness, why should he desire to prevent any man,
 who has paid a proper attention to the subject, from
 attempting to expose the fallacy and falsehood of
 them? He asserts, however, that "Even when
 "cultivated by the honest and truly ingenious,
 "they exhibit an instance of blameable pride;
 "they aim at a science to which man can never
 "attain. It is truly laughable to observe a crea-
 "ture, with hardly knowledge enough of the
 "things around him to guide him with safety,
 "perplexing himself with ontological enquiries
 "into the nature of angels, and the essence of the
 "devil." But Mr. K. who seems to apply to me-
 taphysical debate what Solomon says of contention
 in general, "that it should be left off before it be
 "meddled with," is certainly a very incompetent
 judge what degree of attainment may be reached by
 such men as Locke, Hartley, and Clarke; and let
 their attainments be ever so slender, I cannot agree
 with Mr. K. that it is an instance of blameable pride
 to engage in disquisitions of this nature, because,
 previously to the trial, I presume no man, I mean
 Mr. K. excepted, can pretend to say, what degree
 of proficiency it is practicable to arrive at. Also,
 as I have no objection to join in a laugh, I wish Mr.
 K. had

K. had been so obliging as to have specified the names of those writers who have "perplexed themselves by ontological enquiries into the nature of angels, and the essence of the devil." I acknowledge they have totally escaped my notice and observation; and if we could for a moment suppose, after the authentic information we have received from Mr. K. that there really were no such writers, it would not, I think, be amiss, rather than be disappointed of a laugh, to direct it against the man who may have credulity enough to believe, or effrontery enough to affirm, that there are persons who actually employ themselves in such preposterous speculations.

"The ontologists and pneumatologists, the *nominales* and *reales*, the *doctores seraphici*, and all the tribe of microscopic philosophers, are in the present age of discernment," as Mr. K. further informs us, "totally neglected. Even Malebranche and Locke, the most rational of the metaphysicians, are daily losing ground. A few, however, in the present times, have been so unfortunate as to waste their labour in defending Materialism, in expatiating on Liberty and Necessity, and in proving that man is no more than an animal." It is true, the metaphysical opinions of the middle ages, as contained in the laborious works of those philosophers who go under the general denomination of the Schoolmen, many of whom were men of admirable talents, and the whole Aristotelian system, are now exploded. The dogmas

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of the Stagyrice are justly superseded by the more rational and intelligible hypothesis of Des Cartes and Locke; but whoever represents this total change of system, as a proof of the uncertainty and futility of metaphysical researches in general, should recollect, that natural philosophy has undergone a revolution equally striking; that the system of Locke and Hartley does not differ more from that of Thomas Aquinas, than the Newtonian theory of the universe does from the Ptolemaic. In the present age of discernment, however, it seems, that even Locke is daily losing ground; and whenever the discernment of the age shall happily arrive to an equality with that of Mr. K. the Essay on Human Understanding will no doubt be completely discarded. It is not by force of argument, indeed, that Mr. Locke's system is to be demolished. Our modern men of discernment have found out a method of attack much more pleasant, as well as effectual. In short, they are determined to laugh it out of countenance; and this new sect of laughing philosophers are fortunately able to boast of a leader in Mr. K.'s estimation every way worthy of his distinguished rank and station. "Such miserable effects of metaphysical research," says Mr. K. "have induced an amiable writer, whose heart and abilities vie with each other for excellence, to vindicate the nature and immutability of Truth, to expose the futility of Metaphysics, to confound the devices of its patrons, and to establish the natural rights of common sense."

"sense." This formidable champion has, it seems, given "the last fatal blow to languishing sophistry."

To be serious, I am as willing as Mr. K. to allow every possible degree of merit to Dr. Beattie's intentions. Dr. B. ranks very high in that class of men, amongst whom Mr. K. himself makes no contemptible figure: I mean the men of classical taste and polite literature; and his truly elegant and ingenious productions I have read with peculiar pleasure; but notwithstanding the high encomium passed upon him by Mr. K. I acknowledge I entirely coincide in opinion with those who think it fortunate for Dr. B. that his literary reputation does not depend upon his skill in Metaphysics. In my apprehension, Truth is under little obligation to a champion, who confesses his inability to oppose argument to argument, and silence sophistry by just reasoning; and who, by way of compensation, pretends to erect for her protection, as a dernier resort, a court of appeal, in which a pretended infallible judge, a kind of Pope, presides, stiled by Dr. B. "*Common Sense*;" but I suspect his true name is "*Vulgar Prejudice*;" who decides in cases which have been thought very intricate without a moment's hesitation, and without giving himself the trouble to hear counsel on either side, though both parties are very desirous of pleading their respective causes; and alledge, that they have much to offer in their own defence. I will not however assert, that Dr. Beattie's elaborate work is without its use.

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An honest well-meaning man, such as Mr. R. describes in his forty-second Essay, who for the first forty or fifty years of his life has studied no other books than his journal and ledger, and afterwards retires into the country to study Berkeley and Hume, may well be alarmed, when he finds that between them he is absolutely in danger of being argued out of his existence; since one undertakes to prove that he has no soul, and the other clearly demonstrates that he has no body. But when he opens this incomparable treatise of Dr. B. he is overjoyed to find that he is indeed the very same identical person that he took himself to be before he began to study Metaphysics; and he has the satisfaction to be informed, as he proceeds in the farther perusal of the work, that he may become an able metaphysician at a much easier rate than he himself hoped for, or could have imagined. In short, he is told that common sense alone, without any previous instruction, is sufficient to enable a man to decide upon the most abstruse questions in that abstruse science, and he shuts the book again fully convinced that he is as great a philosopher as Locke, Berkeley, or Hume; and he is now completely qualified to exclaim against all Metaphysics, as futile, useless, unintelligible, and dangerous; and fully prepared to assert, that a single sermon of Tillotson * has done more real good than all the metaphysical works of Dr. Clarke; and, to show

* Vide Essay 168.

that

that he is biassed by no blind partiality for that famous Prelate, he may take occasion to add, that the droll inventions of Hogarth have been of more service to the cause of virtue than all • the sermons of Tillotson.

• Vide Essay 48.

E S S A Y XL

On STYLE.

MR. Addison has most elegantly and justly observed, that “there is as much difference between comprehending a thought clothed in Cicero’s language and that of an ordinary writer, as between seeing an object by the light of a taper or the light of the sun.” What is it then that distinguishes the stile of Cicero from that of an ordinary writer? or, to generalize the question, What is it that constitutes beauty of Stile? This is a question which I have never yet seen satisfactorily answered. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged, that, amongst the crowd of authors who have written “about it and about it,” some have treated the subject with admirable ingenuity and acuteness; and if, after all, they have found it impossible fully to explain the true principles of taste, they have given indisputable proof at least that it was not because they were themselves strangers to their influence. But if there is no fixed and infallible standard of truth, which is in itself fixed and immutable, how can it reasonably be expected that a general standard of beauty can ever be established? For beauty is that quality

quality in objects whatever it be, the view or contemplation of which excites pleasureable emotions; it is plain therefore that beauty is a relative, not a real, quality; and it must be as various as the different tastes and sentiments of all the different individuals of mankind; and with respect to that particular species of beauty which we are now considering, I mean beauty of language, there is perhaps as great a diversity of sentiment as upon any species of beauty whatever; yet that *taste*, by which is meant our capacity for discerning beauty, is not wholly capricious and arbitrary, may be inferred from an appeal to certain facts, which incontrovertibly demonstrate, that the productions of various writers for a long succession of ages have actually excited very lively emotions of pleasure in the minds of a great majority of those who are capable of understanding them; and that a great proportion of this pleasure arises from the beauty of the language in which they expressed their ideas evidently appears, from this consideration alone, that the same sentiments translated into other language cease to charm, or at least to excite the same kind and degree of delight. Of this class of writers we may reckon Homer, Virgil, Demosthenes, Cicero, Livy, Horace, Terence, and innumerable other Grecian and Roman authors, who are universally regarded as the grand models of literary excellence. Here then we seem to approach to something which resembles a standard of beauty as it relates to Style; for if there are those who
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seem to derive no pleasure from these exquisite performances, or who even feel a degree of disgust or tedium from the perusal of them, the instances are so few, that we make not the least scruple to neglect and despise their censures, regarding them as men whose minds are not framed for the perception of beauty, and who are totally incompetent to decide upon any questions relative to it. But, in reality, notwithstanding this general coincidence of opinion, when we attempt to analyse and compare our ideas, we quickly discover, that, while we use the same expressions, there often subsists a very considerable difference of sentiment, and that every man has erected a standard of taste and beauty in his own mind to which he has a secret reference, though he adopts in common with others the same vague and indeterminate expressions of applause and censure. There are also a considerable number of moderns who are generally supposed to have written in the true spirit of the ancients. Some authors of our own nation in particular seem to possess all the graces of composition in an eminent degree: to these indeed an appeal cannot be made with equal confidence as to the ancients themselves, as their literary excellence does not, in the nature of things, admit of the same medium of proof. Nevertheless, the names of some in every department of literature might easily be enumerated, whose writings will, I doubt not, charm through distant ages. Were I called upon to name the author who has most

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successfully transfused the beauties of the ancients into his own performances, perhaps I should fix upon Mr. Hume, and I imagine that his superior merit in point of Style will be as generally acknowledged as that of any writer of modern times: but I own, that when I attempt to trace the causes of those emotions of admiration which I involuntarily feel, I am unable to ascertain them with any degree of precision. Not long since, however, I recollect to have heard a certain modern history of Greece pronounced superior in point of Style to Hume's History of England; This decision I ventured to controvert, affirming, in behalf of Mr. Hume, that his Style was remarkably clear and perspicuous; that it united both ease and dignity; that his diction was polite, his periods harmonious, and his metaphors most happily selected and applied; whereas the Style of the Grecian historian, though free from gross vulgarisms, and not destitute of harmony, was in other respects wretchedly defective. It is at the same time inflated and languid; it is insufferably pompous and verbose; and the continual effort he makes to reach a stately and elevated diction, is frequently so strained, as to carry him to the very borders of burlesque: and the multiplicity of metaphors which he thinks it necessary to use, in order to raise and adorn his Style, have as little pretension to real elegance as the coloured glass beads with which an Indian chieftain delights to decorate his person. It is very probable, that had "Durfey's poetry or Bunyan's prose" been the

the subject of debate, we should have found ourselves equally at variance; and yet I doubt not but we were perfectly agreed in the general, that a good Stile consisted of "proper words in proper places": but the misfortune is, that it seems impossible to determine upon any fixed principles, what are proper words, and where the proper places. I once heard it observed, with no less justice than wit, that Swift's definition of a good Stile conveyed in it as little real meaning as if a telescope were defined to be an instrument consisting of proper glasses in proper places; and yet Swift knew as well as any man the difference between a good and a bad Stile, and if it was capable of being defined as capable of defining it.

Hume, I think, truly observes, that the first elegant prose in our language was written by Swift. Mr. Melmoth indeed inclines to pay that compliment to Sir William Temple, but with little reason. Sir William Temple is certainly a name to which it is difficult not to be partial. He was at once a man of fashion, a man of letters, and a man of business; and in each of these different characters he excelled. But if we consider him merely as a model of elegant composition, he is by no means entitled to the encomiums of so able a critic as Mr. Melmoth. In fact, I suspect that we are in regard to this point a little imposed upon, and that our judgments are insensibly influenced and biassed by certain circumstances to which we do not immediately advert. In reading the works of

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Sir William Temple, we plainly perceive that he was a man perfectly conversant with the great world. We know that he was a man of the politest manners and address, and his mode of writing is free, easy, and amusing, without any tincture of affectation or pedantry; so that we easily persuade ourselves that his Style is graceful; and his solecisms, his uncouth periods, and awkward phrases, pass for the casual slips of an elegant but careless writer. I have at this moment before me a volume of Sir William Temple's works, containing a variety of tracts, any one of which will furnish abundant proofs of the justice of this remark. I shall select a few instances from his consolatory epistle to the Countess of Essex upon the loss of her only daughter. After making some apologies for not answering at a more early period a letter he had received from her Ladyship, he adds, "Your Ladyship at least has had the advantage of being thereby excused some time from this trouble, which I could no longer forbear upon the sensible wounds that have so often of late been given your friends here by such desperate expressions in several of your letters," &c. To say nothing of the inelegant construction of the whole sentence, What should we now think of a writer who should talk of sensible wounds given by desperate expressions? "God Almighty gave you all the blessings of life, and you set your heart wholly upon one, and despise and undervalue all the rest; is this his fault or yours?"

yours?" The *fault of God* is a mode of speech which the delicacy, if not the devotion, of modern critics would not easily pardon. "A friend makes me a feast, and sets all before me that his care or kindness could provide; but I set my heart upon one dish alone, and if that happen to be thrown down, I scorn all the rest; and though he sends for another of the same, yet I rise from the table in a rage, and say, my friend is my enemy, and has done me the greatest wrong in the world. Have I reason, Madam, or good grace, in what I do?" This illustration has little to boast of in point of justness of thought; and it is very defective in dignity and decorum; particularly in the circumstance of sending for *another dish of the same*, as he phrases it; and the vulgarity of the language perfectly accords with the grossness of the ideas. Again: "Passions are the stings without which they say no honey is made; yet I think all sorts of men have ever agreed they ought to be our servants, and not our masters; to give us some agitation for entertainment or exercise, but never to throw reason out of its seat;" so that it seems our passions may at once be compared and bear an equal resemblance to bees, servants, and horses." This reminds one of the happy ductility of Polonius, who allows that the same cloud is very like an ouzle, very like a camel, and very like a whale. Once more: "How has my Lord of Essex deserved, that you should go about to lose him a wife he loves with so much passion, and, which is more, with so much reason;

“ so great an honour and support to his family, so
 “ great a hope to his fortune, and comfort to his
 “ life!” “ To go about to lose my Lord of Essex
 “ a wife,” is a species of phraseology so quaint and
 comic, that one would suppose her Ladyship in
 the midst of her affliction could not but *smile in*
weeping. Some parts of this epistle, however,
 are very beautifully written; and one passage in
 particular is so tender as well as elegant, that I
 cannot forbear to transcribe it, though foreign to
 my present purpose. “ After all, Madam, I think
 “ your loss so great, that would all the passionate
 “ complaints, all the anguish of your heart, do any
 “ thing to retrieve it; could tears water the lovely
 “ plant, so as to make it grow again after once it
 “ is cut down; would sighs furnish new breath, or
 “ could it draw life and spirits from the wasting of
 “ yours; I am sure your friends would be so far from
 “ accusing your passion, that they would encourage
 “ it as much, and share it as deeply, as they could;
 “ but alas! the eternal laws of the creation extin-
 “ guish all such hopes,” &c. In general, I think, it
 may be laid down as a certain maxim, that to at-
 tain to an high degree of excellence in Style, re-
 quires not only great taste but real genius.
 The writers in our own language most cele-
 brated for Style, are Hume, Robertson, Gibbon,
 Johnson, Swift, Addison, and Bolingbroke; all
 of them men of undoubted genius as well as taste.
 There is, indeed, another set of writers, who must
 be allowed to possess great merit, who, with a

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considerable though inferior share of genius, combine an equal or superior degree of taste; and their Style is accordingly equal in elegance, but inferior in energy and felicity of expression. Of this class are Beattie, Blair, Chesterfield, Melmoth, Jenyns, Walpole, &c. I do not however deny that there are some writers, who, without a spark of genius, by means of a good ear, and a certain degree of refinement, which falls short of a just and correct taste, have attained to a polished and harmonious Style of composition, but then it is feeble, languid, and verbose; and though often affectedly pompous, and crowded with ornament, equally destitute of the "*callida junctura*" and the "*curiosa felicitas*."

Upon the whole we may venture to conclude, that beauty of Style, or the art of composition, depending upon a certain occult quality in language, or rather a certain inexplicable delicacy of perception, is not to be acquired by rules. Not that rules are entirely useless.

An author who writes by rule, as has been observed, will undoubtedly avoid gross errors; but he cannot by the mere observance of rules attain to positive beauties. Nothing short of true original genius, improved and cultivated by a correct taste, can ever hope successfully to attempt that bold and glowing Style of composition which we so much admire in the productions of the great masters of eloquence. The "thoughts that breathe, and words that burn," do not fall to the lot of ordinary writers;

and it shows a great defect of judgment whenever they aspire to them. Let not such persons vainly pretend to snatch those graces which are beyond the reach of art. "What then!" it may be said, "are men of moderate talents to sit down in despair of ever being able to acquire the faculty of expressing their thoughts with ease, propriety, and elegance?" By no means. We have innumerable examples of such as, by care and attention alone, have in this respect excelled many far superior to themselves in natural understanding and genius, but who unhappily affected to despise and depreciate this study, as paying that regard to words which is due only to things. All that I contend for is this, that though a Style which merits approbation may be acquired by diligence, a Style which commands admiration cannot. I therefore think that men who have little or no pretension to genius, should not aspire to the higher graces of composition; for by so doing they often make themselves ridiculous; when by aiming at nothing more than purity, perspicuity, and simplicity, they might with much less effort appear in a light much more respectable. An acquaintance with the rules of composition is no doubt of considerable service; but I believe the best method of acquiring a taste for the beauties of Style and language, is by an attentive and repeated perusal of the best authors, by a careful comparison of the productions of different writers, and by imitating in our own performances the Style
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and manner of those admired masters of composition, so far as they are properly imitable by those who do not possess their superiority of genius.

I think experience fully evinces, that it is very possible for a man to possess an elegant and classical taste with respect to the beauties of Style and composition in one language, and to be utterly destitute of it in another. One can scarcely imagine, that if Ogilby, Hobbes, and Chapman, had not derived a sensible pleasure from the poems of Homer, or Milbourne and Trapp from those of Virgil, that they would have engaged in the laborious work of translating those divine authors; and it is well known that a very general taste for the beauties of the ancients prevailed long before the moderns had learned to express their ideas in their vernacular languages with grace or propriety; and indeed the languages themselves were most unjustly held in contempt, as little better than barbarous jargon, and supposed to be wholly undeserving of attention, and incapable of improvement. This prejudice is however greatly upon the decline; and it is generally allowed that the English language in particular may justly pretend to a rivalry with the admired languages of antiquity. I make no scruple at least to place it upon a level with the Roman; and perhaps that very circumstance which is supposed by many to give to the Greek language so decided a superiority, I mean that wonderful copiousness which it derives from its variety of dialects, should rather be considered as a real disadvantage.

vantage : and I believe those who are most inclined to admire and magnify this uncommon property of the Grecian tongue, would think the English language little improved by blending it with our provincial dialects. Spenser has made some attempts of this kind, with a degree of success which will scarcely encourage others to follow the example. In fact, the English language is sufficiently copious to express all our ideas with great force and elegance, and with a degree of accuracy and precision to which the Latin tongue is a stranger. Its genius seems to resemble that of the people by whom it is spoken. The great characteristics of it are strength and energy, but it is very susceptible of the gentler graces. There is a softness, sweetness, and delicacy of Style to which several of our favourite writers, both in poetry and prose, have attained, which sufficiently rescue it from the reproach of harshness or dissonance. There is, moreover, a boldness and freedom in the idiom of our language which admits of the adoption of new terms, and new combinations of words, in a degree which perhaps no other language is capable of. The admirable powers and properties of the English language, as displayed in the whole extent of Versification, might also with propriety be mentioned in this general sketch of its excellencies ; but this I reserve for the subject of a distinct Essay.

E S S A Y XII.

Remarks on ENGLISH VERSIFICATION.

VERSIFICATION may properly be considered as the style of poetry, or the art of composition in metre; and though the taste or mental perception of beauty or deformity is in this case affected by still more lively emotions of disgust or admiration than prose has power to excite, the ultimate causes of those emotions are enveloped in exactly the same degree of darkness and obscurity. It is indeed perhaps somewhat more easy to lay down rules or reasons by which we are supposed to be influenced in forming our judgments respecting the beauty of style in poetry than in prose: but if we pretend to advance a single step farther, we have only the mortification to discover, that the rules which the most sagacious critics have laboured to establish, resolve themselves into this one fundamental and arbitrary dictate of nature, *Such is our pleasure.* For instance, the following canons of criticism may, for aught I know, be as judicious, and of as much real utility, as any belonging to the Code. 1st, That Versification, in order to please, must be smooth and harmonious, exact without stiffness, and easy without negli-

gligence. 2dly, That uniformity should be blended with variety; and, while the first is observed in adhering to the same precise number of poetical feet in each verse or stanza, the latter should be studied in the pauses, cadences, and accents. 3dly, That the sound should, as far as possible, be made to coincide with the sense, from which coincidence arises what is called imitative harmony; and, in general, that the emotion excited by the tone of the verse should accord with the emotion excited by the sentiment expressed, or the object described. It were not difficult to add a multitude of rules of the same kind, and to exemplify the rules by an induction of particular passages, and to expatiate very learnedly upon each; or it were equally easy to quote passages without end, and to point out beauties without number, and to support our opinion by a reference to the same rules, which would in that case be converted into reasons. By these ingenious contrivances, accompanied with a peculiar air of importance and self-complacency, Lord Kaimes has acquired, with many, the reputation of a profound critic; but I never could perceive for my own part that any great addition was made to real knowledge by this sort of information; though I must in justice to his Lordship acknowledge, that in his elaborate work are occasionally interspersed many acute and sagacious observations. With regard to the few reflections I have to offer, I chuse to make my appeal rather to the taste than the reason of the reader, because these

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are subjects which seem to me properly to come within the jurisdiction of taste; for either the rules themselves are liable to suspicion, as not sufficiently confirmed by fact and experience, or if they are universally received as true, it is not the less difficult to demonstrate that they have their origin and foundation in reason. Why do we prefer, for instance, the imitations of Dr. Donne's Satires by Pope to the originals? because it may be said they are far more musical and harmonious. But why do we prefer the musical and harmonious Versification of the former, to the harsh and rugged numbers of the latter? Here we are at a stand, and the preference resolves itself into a mere matter of taste, without the shadow of a reason on which to ground that preference. Is it not then better, without making an empty parade of knowledge which we do not really possess, at once to confess our ignorance and inability to account for those sensations of pleasure which we derive from these sources, than vainly to attempt to reduce those feelings to the dominion of reason, which refuse to acknowledge any authority but that of taste.

I do not, however, pretend to assert, that because the end of poetry is to please, and because it is by an appeal to taste, and not to reason, that the question must be decided, whether that end is actually attained; I say, I do not therefore assert, that all rules of poetical composition are to be decried as impertinent or useless; this would be running into a very absurd extreme,

treme. As there is a certain degree of uniformity in our mental feelings and perceptions, there certainly is a foundation for that uniformity; and it is both entertaining and instructive, by any fair process of induction, to point out the immediate, though we cannot trace the ultimate, causes of those uniform emotions of disgust or admiration, which is in effect to point out the means of avoiding or exciting them; or, in other words, it is to establish certain fixed rules of composition upon the authority of experience; but what I dislike is, the pedantry of appealing to speculative principles in opposition to the decisions of taste; and what I despise is, the ridiculous vanity of attempting to demonstrate by argument, that men ought to admire, when experience proves that no one does or can admire; and, on the other hand, that men are in the wrong to be pleased, when experience proves that it is impossible to avoid it. In a word, of all kinds of literary affectation, that which is most disgusting is, the affectation of judging in matters of taste by rule, and not by feeling; and this appears to me the fundamental defect of the work to which I have before alluded; I mean the *Elements of Criticism*. Lord Kaims was less remarkable for delicacy of taste than acuteness of understanding; and he evidently seems to have thought it much below the dignity of a critic to embrace any opinion even in a mere matter of taste which was not supported by some rule, Where the rule was not already established, therefore,

fore, he was obliged to have recourse to his invention, which did not always supply him with such as were of the most satisfactory kind; and he seems through the whole of his elaborate work to entertain much too high an idea of the importance of those rules; for he seems to consider them as founded in reason, and as laws by which taste ought to be regulated, whereas they are properly founded in taste, and the most judicious and best established rules are really nothing more than the different principles by which experience shows that the decisions of taste are governed. But "*a priori*" it is impossible to prove, by any speculative reasoning, that those principles possess more of innate propriety than the opposite ones: for instance, it is a rule that the unity of action in an Epic poem ought to be preserved; and no one can read the *Iliad* and the *Orlando Furioso* without being sensible of the propriety of it; but if any one should ask the reason upon which this rule is founded, we are compelled to confess that it resolves itself entirely into a matter of taste. We might indeed retreat a step backward, and answer, that the reason is, because the attention ought not to be divided; but the question immediately recurs, "Why ought not the attention to be divided?" And to this what can be replied, but that it is found by experience to be unpleasant, and to occasion weariness and disgust.

Having thus stated my ideas on the subject of speculative and theoretical criticism, I proceed to consider what it is that properly constitutes

constitutes the difference between verse and prose. Verse, I think, may be defined as a species of composition, in which the arrangement of words is subject to certain precise rules; and the ear, as Lord Kaims observes, must be appealed to, as the proper judge for deciding upon the effects produced by these rules. By what mark then does the ear distinguish verse from prose? The proper and satisfactory answer, according to his Lordship, is, that "these make different impressions upon every one who hath an ear." "This advances us," says he, "one step in our enquiry." Now I own I cannot perceive that the smallest advance is made in the enquiry by this answer. Verse and prose are allowed to be different kinds of composition distinguishable by the ear. The question is, By what criterion the ear ascertains the distinction between them; and we are told it is by the different impressions made upon it. But the question itself implies, that different impressions are made upon that organ; and it is the nature of this difference only that needs to be explained: but, in answer to the enquiry respecting that point, we are gravely informed, that we have advanced one step in our enquiry, by being assured that there certainly is a difference. This is one instance out of a thousand which might be adduced of the pompous inanity of Lord Kaims's mode of writing; his Lordship's critical talents, however, have been held in such high and general estimation, that I know not well to whom I can appeal as an authority

authority upon this occasion, in order to corroborate my own sentiments, excepting the celebrated Abbé Winckleman; and he indeed speaks in much more contemptuous terms than I choose to adopt of the whole performance. The proper answer to the question seems to be, that the ear distinguishes verse from prose by its uniformity; for though it may be capable of considerable variety in some respects, yet in others, as it is subject to fixed rules, it must be easily distinguishable by the regular recurrence of those peculiarities of sound which must result from their operation: for I think none of the various modes of Versification in use amongst us is so loose and irregular, as not to be very distinguishable from prose according to this criterion, even by an indifferent ear. In short, the essential difference between verse and prose consists in the measure; for if we admit such performances as *Selemaque* or *Fingal* into the class of poems, how is it possible to draw any precise line between these two species of composition?

In order to preserve some degree of method in the remaining part of this Essay, I shall first offer some remarks upon the different kinds of Versification of which our language and poetry are susceptible; and, 2dly, I shall add a few reflections respecting the merit or demerit of the most celebrated English poets as to this fundamental excellence of that divine art. Of all the different kinds of verse known in English

lish poetry, *blank verse* is undoubtedly entitled to be first mentioned as first in dignity and importance. Voltaire has observed, that blank verse is of so loose a texture, that it costs nothing but the trouble of writing; upon which account he seems to intend to represent it as scarcely worth the trouble of reading, or as far inferior at least to French heroic verse, which consisting of four regular anapests, and admitting little or no variation of pauses, accents, or arrangement, is consequently of much more difficult construction; but this difficulty surmounted, he pretends, is the source of great delight to every reader of taste; a strange criterion, indeed, by which to judge of the comparative merit of these two different kinds of Versification. If that mode of composition, which is most difficult in itself, be upon that account most pleasing, our greatest poets ought no doubt to have retired into "some peaceful province of acrostic land."

"There they might wings display, and altars raise,

"And torture one poor word ten thousand ways."

It is certainly true that blank verse is very easy to write; but for this reason it is as certain, that it is the more difficult to excel in writing it. Such blank verse as Mons. de Voltaire himself has given us a specimen of is, no doubt, to do him justice, truly contemptible: but if Mons. de Voltaire had been competently qualified to criticize upon English poetry, he would have known that the
blank

blank verse of Milton and Shakespeare is, of all the various measures practised among us, that which is most difficult of imitation. Blank verse has so near an affinity to prose, that it requires the most consummate skill and judgment in the arrangement of the periods, as well as the utmost force and elevation of language to preserve the distinction between them. But when the requisite proportion of skill and genius is exerted, and that degree of perfection attained, which genius, conducted by application, never fails to reach, the wonderful effects of this species of poetical composition become fully apparent; and we admire the Versification of the "Paradise Lost," not because Milton has surmounted great difficulties, for this alone is a very weak foundation for applause, but because he has attained to positive beauties of the most exquisite kind. Doubtless, that egregious blockhead who took the trouble to translate the Iliad, and in each of the twenty-four books omitted some one letter of the alphabet, surmounted a difficulty of great magnitude; but is he therefore the subject of our admiration or derision? The truth is, that the conquest of difficulties is never a source of pleasure, at least to men of refinement, except some purpose either of use or beauty is accomplished by it; but, when any such purpose is effected, the emotion of wonder excited by the removal of the difficulty, agreeably to the laws of association, blends itself with the emotion of esteem or admiration excited by the contemplation

tion of utility or beauty; and the complex emotion acquires by this conjunction a high degree of force and vigour. Thus our admiration of the Miltonic Versification, which is in itself exquisitely beautiful, is very much heightened by our knowledge of the extreme difficulty of succeeding in that measure; but the difficulty of writing French heroic verse does not at all induce us to admire the Versification of the *Henriade*, which is in itself destitute of beauty, being tame, languid, and monotonous. But if it should now be asked, What are those exquisite beauties of which blank verse is susceptible, and for which it is so much celebrated, I think we may reply in a few words, that they are majesty, melody, and variety. I should far exceed the limits of my paper, were I to pretend to enlarge upon these heads. A hint or two is all that an essayist, who attempts slight sketches only, and leaves to more elaborate artists the praise of finished productions, can be expected to offer. The first characteristic of blank verse then, as it appears in the productions of Milton and Shakespeare, is "majesty." I do not think that even the hexameter of the ancients possesses this property in an equal degree. The hexameter is no doubt a very noble poetical measure, but it does not seem capable of that long continued pomp of sound of which we have so many examples in our great poets. There are hexameter verses which will be found superior perhaps to any single lines or periods in the
Paradise

Paradise Lost; but when twenty or thirty verses are repeated successively, the superiority of blank verse becomes very apparent. I know not any equal number of hexameters which can be placed in competition with the following verses from Milton:

— the great Creator from his work
Desisting, tho' unwear'd, up return'd;
Up to the heav'n of heav'ns his high abode,
Thence to behold this new-created world,
Th' addition of his empire, how it shew'd
In prospect from his throne; how good, how fair,
Answering his great idea. Up he rode,
Follow'd with acclamations, and the sound
Symphonious, of ten thousand harps that tun'd
Angelic harmonies. The earth, the air,
Resounded; thou remember'st, for thou heard'st;
The heav'ns and all the constellations rung;
The planets in their stations list'ning stood,
While the bright pomp ascended jubilant.
Open, ye everlasting gates, they sung;
Open, ye heav'ns, your living doors, let in
The great Creator, from his work return'd
Magnificent; his six days work, a world.

The monotonous close of the hexameter, though it may be disguised in a great measure for a few lines, by the surprising variety it is capable of in other respects, cannot fail to strike, and in some degree to disgust, the ear upon frequent repetition; and, in the recital of long passages, to cause very unseasonable and unpleasant interruptions to what Pope styles “ the long resounding
Q “ march

“march and energy divine.” To compare blank verse with our own, or with the French heroic couplet, in this respect were superfluous. But, 2dly, blank verse, *i. e.* the blank verse of Milton and Shakespeare, is no less remarkable for its melody than its majesty! This property of blank verse arises from the unbounded liberty the poet enjoys of varying his pauses, and extending his periods, so as to produce the utmost fulness and harmony of cadence: and in this respect it has a manifest advantage over the heroic couplet as well as the hexameter. It would be difficult to find any equal number of hexameters or couplets, so melodious or grateful to the ear, as the passage just quoted from Milton. It indeed possesses the three great characteristics of that species of verse, majesty, melody, and variety, in a high degree of perfection. Upon the last of those characteristics, it is very unnecessary to expatiate. As opposed to the hexameter measure and the heroic couplet, its variety evidently arises from its happy exemption from the necessity of an uniform close: and, as to myself, I must acknowledge, that however superior the hexameter may be to the heroic couplet in other respects, the perpetual recurrence of the dactyl and spondee is more fatiguing to my ear than what Dryden calls the *rattle* in the close of the couplet. The couplet, however, though confessedly inferior to hexameter, as well as blank verse, is far from being destitute of force or beauty: it is capable of some degree of variety in its accents,

cents, and very great diversity in its pauses: it is lively, vigorous, and animated, and particularly adapted to gay and airy subjects, of which "the Rape of the Lock" is a decisive proof. It seems not to admit of any considerable inversion of language; but Dryden, in numerous instances, has very happily indulged himself in the liberty of running one couplet into another, by which means he has added wonderfully to the spirit, freedom, and energy of his verse. Lord Kaimes indeed asserts, that every couplet ought to finish with some close in the sense, for which he fails not as usual to assign a reason. "Every couplet," says his Lordship, "must of course conclude with a musical pause; and if it is accompanied by a pause in the sense, the coincidence gratifies at the same time the ear and understanding." This reasoning is just if applied to a single couplet; but surely it is not necessary to have our ears purged by an Archangel with *euphrasy and rue*, to be sensible how much the petty pleasure arising from such coincidence is overbalanced by the additional delight we derive from that variety and animation which are the result of occasional deviations from this rule. As a complete confutation of all such criticisms, I would confidently oppose the initial paragraph of Dryden's well-known poem of the Hind and Panther.

A milk-white Hind, immortal and unchang'd,
Fed on the lawns, or on the forest rang'd;
Without unspotted, innocent within,
She fear'd no danger, for she knew no sin;

Q 2

Yet

Yet had she oft been chas'd with horns and hounds,
 And Scythian shafts ; and many winged wounds
 Aim'd at her heart ; was often forc'd to fly,
 And doom'd to death, tho' fated not to die.

But Lord Kaims is so fastidious a critic, that he will not allow the slightest musical pause to intervene between an adjective and substantive, a substantive and verb, or a verb and adverb. Who would have imagined that the following lines of Pope were faulty :

In these deep solitudes and awful cells,
 Where heav'nly-pensive contemplation dwells,
 And ever-musing melancholy reigns——

They always, however, appeared to Lord Kaims exceptionable, on account of the pause interjected between the verb and consequent substantive ; and his Lordship, after a great deal of deep thinking, was at last fortunate enough, as he informs us, to discover a reason in support of his taste. The case is stated by his Lordship with all the accuracy and formality of the profession to which he belonged. “ Between the active substantive and
 “ the verb, placed in their natural order, there
 “ is no difficulty of interjecting a pause, because
 “ an active being is not always in motion, and
 “ therefore it is easily separable in idea from its
 “ action : but when by inversion the verb is
 “ placed first, is it *lawful* to separate it by a
 “ pause from the active substantive ?” To this curious question his Lordship answers positively,
 “ No, because an action is not in idea separable
 “ from

“ from the agent, more than a quality from the
“ subject to which it appertains.” If Lord Kaimes
had not so expressly affirmed the contrary, I own
I should have suspected that his Lordship’s feelings
on this as on other occasions had complaisantly
accommodated themselves to the rule discovered,
or rather had yielded implicit obedience to the
law promulgated by his Lordship.

I am of opinion that Pope has weakened the
general effect of his poetry very considerably, by
adhering too closely to the rule specified by Lord
Kaimes, respecting the propriety of concluding
every couplet by a pause in the sense as well as
in the music. It has given his Versification an air
of tameness and uniformity, and in this as well as
other characteristics of poetic genius, I cannot but
regard him as very inferior to Dryden, though he
perhaps more than compensates for this inferiority
by the “*limæ labor*,” which appears so conspicuous
throughout all his works. Dryden was a writer
to the last degree negligent and incorrect; he was
also often unhappy in the choice of his subjects,
and his sentiments upon the subjects which he has
chosen are frequently very exceptionable, and
sometimes very absurd. Pope was, as an elegant
critic justly styles him, the Poet of Reason; and,
in perusing his productions, the understanding is
improved, while the imagination is delighted. But
still it must be allowed, that the sacred mantle
which descended from Shakespeare to Milton, and
which Dryden sometimes wore with dignity, hung
loose

loose upon Pope, "like a giant's robe upon a dwarfish thief." I shall take the liberty of digressing a moment to give a striking instance of this. In the celebrated harangue of Othello before the Venetian Senate, he speaks, amongst other particulars, of what he calls his *Travel's History*,

"Of antres vast, and deserts idle,
"Rough quarries, rocks, and hills, whose heads touch
"heav'n."

Pope, in his edition of Shakespeare, for "idle," substitutes "wilde." Warburton himself could have done no worse. The epithet *idle* is truly Shakesperian; but it was beyond the reach of Pope. Milton, indeed, has used it with the same happy boldness in one of his sonnets, in which he mournfully complains that his eyes "their seeing had forgot."

Nor to their idle orbs doth light appear,
Or sun, or moon, or stars, throughout the year,
Or man or woman.

Next to blank verse and the heroic couplet, the elegiac stanza seems to possess the greatest share of importance and popularity: it has a kind of plaintive flow, which renders it peculiarly suitable to tender and melancholy subjects. Hammond and Shenstone, and, above all, Gray, have been particularly successful in this species of Versification. In the last century this stanza was very erroneously considered as superior in dignity to the heroic couplet; and it was accordingly adopted by Sir William Davenant in his Epic poem of *GONDIBERT*,

DIBERT,

DIBERT, and by Dryden in his "Annus Mirabilis," and in other compositions of the same cast. The Spenserian stanza must be allowed to exhibit a certain air of stateliness, and it is not deficient in force or harmony; but it soon palls upon the ear by its uniformity. There seems to be a sort of analogy, remote and somewhat fanciful indeed, between the stanza of Spenser and the subject of his poem, sufficient however to prevent our regretting the choice he has made. A kind of stiff, formal, and obsolete magnificence seems to predominate in both. This difficult stanza has been very happily revived by some modern writers, particularly by Thomson in his *Castle of Indolence*, and by Dr. Beattie in the first book of the *Minstrel*.

It is rather singular, that the French heroic couplet, consisting of four anapests, should never be used amongst us but on subjects of mirth and gaiety, and with the utmost propriety. What can be deemed, for instance, more perfect in its kind than the *Verseification of the Bath Guide*? but surely no admirer of that exquisite *jeu d'esprit* will deny that the first couplet of the *Henriade*

Je chante ce héros qui régna sur la France,
Et par droit de conquête, et par droit de naissance.

is as little adapted to the majesty of the *Epopœia* as

"But what with my Nivernois hat can compare,
My bag wig, and lac'd ruffles, and black solitaire?"

The regular Pindarics of Gray and Collins are entitled to a very high degree of applause; and not-

withstanding

withstanding the severity of Dr. Johnson's criticism, I acknowledge I have read many irregular efforts of the Pindaric muse with great pleasure. Exclusive of Dryden's Immortal Ode, which far transcends all praise, the Lycidas of Milton, Lord Lyttleton's Monody, Shaw's Ode to the Nightingale, and many other productions might be mentioned, which sufficiently demonstrate that regularity of metre is not essential to poetic excellence. I cannot pretend to enumerate all the different kinds of Versification in use amongst us. Of those which I have not specified, perhaps the Hudibrastic couplet is most valuable, as admirably calculated for burlesque poetry. Prior, in his *Alma*, has shown himself scarcely inferior to Butler in his dextrous management of it.

According to the plan proposed, I am now to make some observations upon the merit or demerit of our most celebrated poets in point of Versification; but, on revising what I have written, I find I have in a great measure anticipated my own intention; and the length of this Essay is already such as to make it necessary to draw to a conclusion. Of the Versification of Shakespeare I have declared my sentiments at large in a former Essay. Of Milton, Dryden, and Pope, I have taken occasion to speak in the course of the present. To the last perhaps some may think I have scarcely done justice. Pope has often been stiled the best versifier in the English language. If by the best is only meant the

the most polished and correct versifier, I am ready to acquiesce in the panegyric; but if his mode of Versification is stiled the best, as affording the highest degree of delight, I can by no means allow it to be true. In this respect Shakespeare, Milton, and Dryden, all rank much above him. Pope does not sufficiently conceal his art; he wants simplicity. The flow of his verse, though very harmonious, is seldom tender or pathetic, and still less frequently lofty and majestic; in his translation of the Iliad, however, he rises to very sublime heights. It is a wonderful performance, far superior, no doubt, to the Eneid of Dryden, or probably to any other translation that ever appeared in the world. I have in my possession, and I preserve it as a curiosity, the vile doggrel translation of Hobbes. For the amusement of those who may not have met with it, I shall transcribe a few parallel passages from both, that the pleasure of contrast may be enjoyed in perfection, and that the reader may contemplate at once the extremes of poetic elegance and meanness.

Bk I. Ως ἰσὰν υἱόμηνος τῷ δ' ἔκλυε Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων, &c.

His * prayer was granted by the Deity,
Who with his silver bow and arrows keen
Descended from Olympus silently
In likeness of the fable night unseen.
His bow and quiver both behind him hang;
The arrows chink as often as he jogs,
And as he shot, the bow was heard to twang, &c.

HOBBS,

* Chryses,

Thua

Thus Chryses pray'd; the favouring pow'r attends;
 And from Olympus' lofty tops descends.
 Bent was his bow the Grecian hearts to wound;
 Fierce as he mov'd, his silver shafts resound,
 Breathing revenge; a sudden night he spread,
 And gloomy darkness roll'd around his head.
 The fleet in view, he twang'd his deadly bow, &c.

POPE.

Id. Πατρόκλος δὲ φίλῳ ἐπεπειθεὶς ἔταίρῳ, &c. &c.

This said, Patroclus led Briseis forth,
 And to Atreides' messengers her gave.
 She with them went, tho' much against her heart.
 Achilles from his friends went off and pray'd,
 And sitting with his face to th' sea apart,
 Weeping unto his mother, Thetis said, &c.

HOBBS,

Patroclus now th' unwilling beauty brought;
 She in soft sorrows and in pensive thought
 Past silent as the heralds held her hand,
 And oft look'd back, slow moving o'er the strand.
 Not so his loss the fierce Achilles bore,
 But sad, retiring to the sounding shore,
 O'er the wild margin of the deep he hung,
 That kindred deep from whence his mother sprung;
 There bath'd in tears of anger and disdain,
 Thus loud lamented to the stormy main. POPE.

Id. Ἡμεῖς δ' ἡλίου κατέδυ, καὶ ἐπὶ κνέφας ἦλθε, &c. &c.

But when the sun had borne away his light,
 Upon the sands they laid them down to sleep;
 And when again Aurora came in sight,
 Again they launch their ship into the deep.
 A good fore-wind Apollo with them sent;
 Then with her breast the ship the water tore,
 Which by her down on both sides roaring went,
 And soon arrived at the Trojan shore. HOBBS.

'Twas night; the chiefs beside their vessel lie,
 Till rosy morn had purpled o'er the sky;

Then

Then launch and hoist the mast: indulgent gales,
 Supply'd by Phœbus, fill the swelling sails;
 The milk-white canvas bellying as they blow
 The parted ocean foams, and roars below;
 Above the bounding billows swift they flew,
 Till now the Grecian camp appear'd in view. POPE.

The principal remaining poets, of whom it is necessary for me to take some notice, are, I think, Cowley, Waller, Thomson, and Young. Had Cowley's judgment borne any proportion to his genius, he would unquestionably have been entitled to a very high rank in the public estimation, which indeed, while the public judgment was as yet immature, he actually enjoyed. In the present improved state of Versification, we have few productions of the English muse more soft, more gay, more airy, than his Anacreontics, his *Acme* and *Septimius*, or his *Chronicle*. On the other hand, in the pathetic and plaintive stile, few pieces exhibit a more mournful flow of numbers than his elegy on Harvey, the poem called the *Complaint*, and some others. He knew how to express, as well as feel, the most tender as well as the most lively emotions of soul.

"Forgot his Epic, nay, Pindaric, art;

"Yet still we love the language of his heart."

Waller I regard as greatly inferior to Cowley in genius; but he possessed a more correct taste and truer judgment. His Versification, when compared with that of the majority of his predecessors, is eminently smooth and harmonious; and he contributed much to polish and
 refine

refine the elegant art which he cultivated. Thomson's celebrated poem, I mean the Seasons, I think, enjoys a reputation at least equal to its merit. As Pope has been called the Poet of Reason, Thomson may, with equal justice, be stiled the Poet of Nature. He surveyed her various scenes with a curious and attentive eye; and he describes them with warmth, accuracy, and fidelity; and in this the real excellence of his work consists. When Thomson is not describing or moralizing, he is no poet; when he aims at elevation, he is always turgid; when he wishes to be splendid, he is only gaudy.

"From bright'ning fields of ether fair disclos'd,
Child of the sun, refulgent Summer comes
In pride of youth, and felt thro' nature's depth,
He comes, attended by the sultry hours,
And ever-fanning breezes on his way;
While from his ardent look the turning Spring
Averts her blushful face."

Such mechanical poetry as this is calculated merely for grown children. The tales he interweaves are very indifferently narrated. His diction is either artificially strained, or disgustingly familiar; and his Versification is such, that for twenty or thirty lines together, I frequently find a great difficulty to distinguish it from prose. In a word, it is a poem in which description too much holds the place of sense. We read, and we commend, and pretend to admire, and at last we drop asleep over it. Nevertheless, it is upon the whole a pleasing popular performance, and I believe it will long remain

remain so; though I greatly doubt whether it will always retain its present degree of reputation. His poem, entitled "Liberty," I never yet could summon up resolution enough to read fairly through. His smaller pieces merit little attention, the "Castle of Indolence" excepted, which is indeed a very elegant and beautiful allegory.

Young's Night Thoughts may not improperly be considered as a good poetical contrast to Thomson's Seasons. One delighted as much to exhibit the gloomy, as the other the cheerful face of things. Young's genius was without doubt of a rank much superior to that of Thomson; he possessed, as Addison, I think, says of Lee, true poetic fire, though clouded and obscured by thick volumes of smoke. In the article of sublimity, the Night Thoughts may vie with Paradise Lost itself, though in every other respect it would be absurd to attempt a comparison between them. The general character of Young's Versification is that of harshness and ruggedness, though many passages may be produced as exceptions. Of the earlier poetical productions of Young I am no admirer: it is to a work begun after he was sixty years of age, when, if we will give any credit to his own declaration,

"He long had buried what gives life to live,

"Firmness of nerve, and energy of thought."

that he derives, and will continue to derive, his reputation: for certainly such poems as the Last Day, and the Paraphrase on Job, or even his satires and tragedies, could never entitle
him

him to a permanent mansion in the temple of Fame.

It would be doing great injustice to living merit, after enumerating so many illustrious names who have done honour to our age and country, to omit to mention a celebrated poetess of our own times: I mean Mrs. Barbauld, who, in the elegant miscellaneous collection with which she has favoured the world, has exhibited the most beautiful examples of Versification happily diversified, and accommodated to the greatest variety of subjects that I recollect to have met with in any one author. In the poem stiled "Corfica," her blank verse makes a very near approach to the Miltonic majesty, and the Summer-Evening Meditation is in the best manner of Young.—Delia breathes the very soul of Hammond! and the Address to Wisdom is written in the true spirit of Prior. The poem on the Origin of Song-Writing might have done honour to Waller; and the Ode to Spring is entitled at least to "divide the crown" with Collins's exquisite Ode to Evening. I have seen an allegorical poem also in manuscript, by the same fair and elegant writer, which Spenser would readily have acknowledged as the work of a kindred mind.

This lady, certainly, if England had produced no Carters, Montagues, or Sewards, might alone safely be put in competition with the most admired writers of her own sex abroad; with a De Sevigné, a Des Houlières, a Du Bocage,

or

or a Dacier. Of one species of knowledge, with which the literary world in general is well acquainted, she is indeed apparently wholly destitute—and that is the knowledge of her own superiority of genius and merit.

ESSAY XIII.

On the USE of REASON in connection with RELIGION.

THERE is an argument which has been often triumphantly urged by the Roman Catholic writers, and which is, indeed, so specious and imposing, so apparently just in its principle, and extensive in its consequences, that I do not wonder it should be regarded as the pillar and ground of their faith. If, say they, the truth and necessity of a divine Revelation be admitted, it cannot be doubted but it is equally necessary that the true sense of that revelation should by some means be ascertained. Now common sense and daily experience fully evince, that the majority of mankind are wholly incompetent to enter into any such discussions; and also, that the opinions of private Individuals, who may be supposed best qualified to form a right judgment, are so opposite and discordant, that there is not the most distant probability that the genuine doctrines of christianity should ever be established on a firm and solid foundation, except there exists some common standard of religious truth, to which it may be lawful for all men to appeal, in cases of doubt and difficulty, and to which

which they shall be indispensably obliged to submit: and where shall we find that standard but in the decisions of the Universal Church! which is under the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit!—which is founded upon a rock, against which the gates of Hell shall never prevail!—whose voice is the voice of God, against which it is folly, presumption, and impiety for any particular member of that holy and mystical body to oppose his own fallible reasonings and unauthorized opinions. This is the faint outline of that grand argument upon which the Romanists always profess their readiness to rest the whole controversy between them and the Protestants; and this is the argument which the advocates for Protestantism in general practice every artifice to evade, and of which they seem to be often staggered and confounded by the force; and I do not in the least wonder that this should be the case. For many successive centuries this maxim had been regarded as sacred and incontrovertible; and when the Protestants, therefore, first found themselves under the necessity of calling it in question, they avoided giving any greater shock to their own prejudices, as well as those of their antagonists, than they were by the pressure of the occasion led, or rather driven to do; and therefore they contented themselves with denying the infallibility of the Church but they still admitted that the Church might justly claim *authority* in controversies of faith;

R

and

and, that what the Church taught was to be received as true, unless it could be proved contrary to the tenor of Scripture. But in the prosecution of the controversy, the Protestants quickly found themselves involved in new perplexities: for either every private Christian had a right to judge whether the doctrines taught by the Church were agreeable to Scripture, in which case the authority of the Church was an empty sound, without any real meaning; or if the Church was allowed to judge of the conformity of its own doctrines to the declarations of Scripture, then the authority of the Church was plainly equivalent to the infallibility claimed by the Romanists: The only difference, according to the observation of a witty writer, consisting in this,—that in the one case, the Church never *could* err;—and in the other, that it never *did* err. For a long time, however, the learned and reverend champions of Protestantism contented themselves with insisting upon, and making the most they could of this curious distinction: and it was not, perhaps, till the Bangorian Controversy took place, at the beginning of the present century, that this absurd and ridiculous subterfuge was compleatly abandoned; and that the right of individuals to appeal from the authority of the Church to the authority of the Sacred Scriptures, was admitted in its full extent, with an explicit avowal and approbation of all its consequences.

It

It is well known how great a clamour that memorable Controversy excited: the Church did not want for able and valiant defenders of the faith; but, alas! the fatal blow was given, and Church-authority, that mighty Dagon, was at length thrown prostrate upon the ground! Notwithstanding, however, that we who live in this enlightened age are able clearly to discern the fallacy of this boasted argument in behalf of Church-authority, it required a force of mind and an acuteness of penetration, which perhaps no one man ever possessed, compleatly and at once to detect this dangerous and delusive sophism. Many generations passed away after the Reformation had taken place before the most rational, liberal, and intelligent persons of the Protestant communion could prevail upon themselves to acknowledge that every private Christian was under an indispensable obligation, to exercise his own Reason and judgment, in forming his opinions in Religion; and that the authority of the Church, and the decisions of Fathers and Councils, as such, ought not in the smallest degree to bias his determinations. These maxims, which to us appear so just and obvious, were universally reprobated, as fraught with the most mischievous consequences;—as lifting up the doors that heresy and schism might enter in.—The utmost wildness and extravagance of sentiment, leading to a general state of intellectual anarchy, they imagined must be the inevitable result of such an unbounded freedom of discussion. It requires

indeed at present no extraordinary sagacity to see the weakness and futility of these apprehensions; nay, it really requires great strength of mind to feel the full force of an argument, however subtle and plausible, which we have always been accustomed to consider as confuted; and we cannot therefore without difficulty conceive the prodigious weight of the impression which it must have made on the minds of those who had from their earliest years been taught to regard it as sacred for its truth, and venerable for its antiquity. Yet it appears to me, that though human authority has been compleatly discarded, the province and jurisdiction of Reason have never been so accurately defined as to preclude all further discussion upon the subject. It is even impossible perhaps to fix such precise boundaries to her dominion as to enable any man upon just grounds to pronounce "hitherto shalt thou come and no farther;" and as no precise line of distinction can be drawn, or at least can be clearly discerned in this case, some will be apt to attribute more to human Reason as a judge of divine truths than she is entitled to claim; and others will be inclined to depreciate and to degrade that noble faculty of the mind below its just value. Notwithstanding this remediless difference of sentiment, I hope I may be permitted to offer a few observations upon this subject, without justly incurring the charge of presumption; for as matter widely diffused may be condensed though it cannot

not be annihilated, so in this case, notwithstanding the impossibility of attaining to a precise coincidence of opinion, arguments may still avail to reduce those differences of opinion which must always subsist within a narrower compass; and thus we may in morals, as well as mathematics, imagine the possibility of a perpetual approach, whilst we acknowledge the impossibility of an actual contact.

And, 1st, I assert, without fear of contradiction, that Reason is the sole judge of the evidences of a divine revelation: A revelation destitute of evidence cannot be supposed; and to appeal to authority as a sufficient ground of evidence is a palpable absurdity. The authority of the Church, if the claim was admitted, must rest upon the authority of revelation; and the authority of revelation itself must rest upon the authority of its evidence; and to make the authority of the evidence rest upon the authority of the Church, is evidently to argue in a circle, and in so small and confined a circle that the sophism must be instantly detected. Accordingly, the Papists themselves appeal to Reason as a competent judge of this matter; and very celebrated treatises have been written by the divines of the Romish communion, in which the evidences of Christianity have been ably and learnedly stated. Reason then is the acknowledged judge of this question; but the danger is, least we should require a degree of evidence which Reason has no right to exact. If the evi-

dence rises to probability, we should act most irrationally in rejecting it because it falls short of moral certainty!—as justly might we reject moral certainty because it falls short of mathematical demonstration. Whoever attends to the evidences of the Christian religion with impartiality and candour, must be compelled to allow the probability at least of its divine origin: In this case how will Reason direct a man to act? to remain in a state of perpetual scepticism is equally irksome and difficult; the balance will ultimately incline either to the one side or the other. Now to reject a probability is to embrace an improbability: Let those then who incline to infidelity in consequence of the objections to which Christianity is liable, and the difficulty they find in answering those objections satisfactorily,—let such men reflect upon the insuperable difficulties with which that infidelity is itself attended:—Let them take the trouble to frame not only a negative but a positive creed, and they will soon see how much weaker and more exposed to objection every particular and distinct scheme of infidelity is than Christianity—how much less the positive evidence in its favour—how much greater the inconsistencies and improbabilities connected with it.

But, 2dly, Reason is competent to judge not only of the evidences but the doctrines of revelation: this it must be owned is a proposition to which an unqualified assent ought not to be given; it stands in need of much explanation,
and

and no explanation can be expected to produce universal satisfaction. Reason and Revelation must doubtless be in their natures perfectly reconcilable; but they may apparently differ, and in that case must revelation be explained in conformity to Reason, or must Reason submit to be silenced by the voice of revelation? In order to assist our determinations upon this point, it must be remembered, that there is a most important distinction between Reason abstractedly considered, *i. e.* eternal truth and rectitude, and human Reason; or those principles which we adopt upon the presumption of their conformity to the dictates of abstract truth; and it is very supposable that the doctrines of revelation may differ very widely from our ideas of Reason, though they unquestionably correspond to Reason as it subsists in the divine mind, *i. e.* to perfect truth, rectitude and wisdom. Nevertheless, there are some things so clearly discernible by the light of human Reason, that it is impossible for us, without discarding it as entirely useless, to doubt of their agreement with right Reason or abstract truth; and if it could be proved that revelation really contradicted any of those principles which Reason indubitably inculcated, we should indeed be reduced to a state of the most distressing perplexity. If Christianity, accompanied as I think it is with convincing evidence of a divine original, should in express terms assert, that the substance which I see in the form

of bread and wine is really and truly the body and blood of Christ, and that the same identical body subsists whole and undivided at the same instant of time in a thousand different places, or if I could believe that this religion really ascribes all the attributes of Deity to three distinct persons, and yet maintains in the most unequivocal language the absolute unity of the Divine Nature, I would without hesitation acknowledge, that Reason and Understanding were given us in vain! The simple dictates of Reason, which in cases of this nature have a clearness and certainty which no species of evidence can supersede, must destroy the authority of revelation; and the evidence by which this revelation is accompanied must, on the other hand, confound every principle of Reason, and "amaze indeed the very faculty of eyes and ears." Happily we are not reduced to this alarming state. Nothing contained in the Christian revelation can with the least degree of justice be said to contradict those principles of Reason which have any pretence to be styled self-evident. But some will not scruple to affirm, that many articles of the Christian faith may nevertheless be deemed irrational, as not coinciding with those conclusions which Reason enables us to deduce from self-evident principles; they think that evident marks of imperfection are discernible in the general scheme; and they fancy, as a certain Spanish Monarch is reported to have boasted with respect to the system of
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of the Universe; that if they had been consulted a much better constitution of things might have been adopted. This mode of arguing and of judging appears to me to proceed from the most dangerous presumption. Nothing can be more unwarrantable; nothing can exhibit a stronger instance of the fatal effects of pride, combined with folly, than the rejection of a revelation authenticated by sufficient evidence, because it may contain some things which may not approve themselves to the understanding of the objector. Let us consider how great was the previous improbability that a human mind should be capable of comprehending the divine counsels, and how absurd it is to expect that a scheme so far above our comprehension should in all its parts approve itself to our understandings.

Say of this plan the bearings and the ties,
The strong connections, nice dependencies;
Gradations just, has thy pervading soul
Look'd through?

The general tendency of the plan indeed we may reasonably expect should appear to be worthy of its divine author. If it could be fairly proved to be inimical to the interests of truth, virtue and happiness, it would be an internal argument against the divine origin of it, as powerful as any external arguments which could possibly be produced in its favour; but it is a very weak pretence indeed for with-holding our assent, to alledge that those interests are not promoted in that particular manner

manner which we should have deemed most eligible and efficacious.

3dly, It must be confessed that Reason, though of admirable use in judging of the evidences and investigating the doctrines of revelation, is yet incapable of producing uniformity of opinion: This the Romanists urge as an irrefragable proof of that infallibility to which they advance so bold a claim, and which is, as they say, absolutely necessary to the preservation of the unity and purity of the Christian faith. But, as Dr. Clarke admirably observes, “the true unity of Christians is not a unity of faith in the bond of ignorance, or a unity of profession in the bond of persecution, but a unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”.

Experience proves, that a diversity of sentiments in Religion is not attended with those pernicious effects which, in former times even wise and good men in general so needlessly apprehended. Those who are in the habitual practice of reading the Sacred Scriptures with a view to their religious information and improvement, can scarcely fail to imbibe much of the spirit of Christianity; in comparison of which a just view of its speculative doctrines is of little consequence. Diversity of opinion imbibed where it subsists affords ample scope for the exercise of some of the most amiable of the Christian virtues; and it is not improbable that a coincidence of opinions may at length take place in the Christian world, which the flaming zealots
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of the present age would view with astonishment. If, however, uniformity of sentiment should be supposed utterly and for ever unattainable, sincerity surely is attainable by all; and a sincere enquirer after truth, who is actuated by the genuine spirit of Christianity, can never fail of recommending himself to the Divine approbation and acceptance—who is I say actuated by the genuine spirit of Christianity; for I willingly acknowledge, that by far too great a stress has been placed upon sincerity, when uninfluenced and unenlightened by a single ray of that mild, humble, and benevolent spirit. Sincerity is indeed one of the most important and essential branches of Religion; but it is not therefore to usurp the place of all the rest: Sincerity is a virtue highly commendable; but sincerity will of itself go but a very little way towards forming a character of distinguished moral excellence. Virtue consists in an undeviating rectitude of action, resulting from perfect rectitude of principle; but how far short does sincerity fall of this idea of virtue. A man may be sincere, yet almost all his actions may be pernicious; almost all his mental affections and motives of action may be detestable. I know not that the sincerity of Bonner can be justly called in question, when with a fire-brand in his hand he appeared like a fiend let loose from Hell ranging for revenge, and filling every corner of the land with scenes of blood and horror. Calvin was without question sincere when,
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with unrelenting barbarity, he urged the legal murder of Servetus; but is that execrable action therefore less the subject of our indignation or abhorrence? And St. Paul, whose sincerity when breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of Christ no one can doubt, does not scruple to style himself the chief of sinners, and not worthy to be called an Apostle, because he persecuted the Church of God. St. Paul well knew, after his conversion at least, that the virtue which must recommend us to the favour of God does not consist in a blind and furious zeal for even truth itself, and much less for pernicious dogmas fraught with falsehood and folly, but in what he styles the fruits of the Spirit, patience, long suffering, justice, temperance, meekness and charity: "though I give my body to be burned," says that great Apostle, "and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." The Pharisee described by our Saviour as praying in the Temple, is represented as entertaining a very high idea of his attainments in moral excellence; his sincerity as far as appears was unimpeachable; yet we are assured that the Publican went down to his house justified rather than the other: The truth is, that a man's believing himself to be virtuous no more constitutes virtue than a man's believing himself to be skilled in the sciences constitutes learning. The Scripture declares, that if we have not the spirit of Christ we are none of his:

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let us beware then of an error so fatal as must be the supposition that because we are sincere, *i. e.* because under the influence of a strong delusion, we vainly and falsely imagine our actions conformable to the standard of moral rectitude, we cannot justly incur punishment for any species of misconduct proceeding from the most corrupt heart or depraved inclination.

4thly, The last observation I have to make, whether it may be thought the concession affords an advantage to the Roman Catholics in this argument or not, is, that it appears to me an undeniable fact, that the bulk of unlearned Christians are, as the Catholics alledge, wholly incompetent to enter into those discussions which are necessary to form an opinion upon just grounds, either respecting the evidences or the doctrines of Christianity. I am sensible that the generality of Protestant writers have maintained that the evidences of Christianity are so strong, and the doctrines of Christianity so clear, that the unlearned multitude may safely be left to decide for themselves upon these important points; and I readily acknowledge that they ought to be left at full liberty so to do; but as a question of fact, I cannot but admit that they are incompetent to form a true and accurate judgment; how then is this apparent incongruity to be reconciled? Concisely, and I think satisfactorily, thus: I deny the claim of the Romish Church to infallibility; or
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of any Church whatever to any degree of authority, for the reasons so often and so ably urged by various writers: It is a claim wholly unsupported by Reason or Scripture: it is a most daring usurpation over the consciences of mankind: it is raising an insurmountable obstacle in the way of religious information and improvement: "it brings to one dead level every mind," and it has a tendency to produce an universal torpor of all the mental powers; but I do not think it necessary in order to invalidate this claim, to maintain, that all persons are sufficiently qualified to judge for themselves upon religious subjects. I content myself with asserting, that all men have a right to judge for themselves; and when the right is once established I have no doubt but those who are qualified to judge, will in general exercise that right; and though there may be a considerable difference of opinion amongst those who are best qualified to judge, yet when perfect freedom of investigation is allowed, and the abilities exerted in the support of opposite opinions may be supposed nearly equal, those who are engaged on the side of truth must upon the whole possess a manifest advantage over those who are engaged in the cause of error; and however imperceptible the bias may originally be, if it is real, the effects must in time be apparent. Truth must insensibly and gradually gain ground, till it shall at length attain a decided and permanent superiority; and the experience of all ages demonstrates that

that the bulk of mankind, secretly conscious of their own incapacity, embrace almost implicitly the opinions of those whose superior station, abilities and authority, entitle them at least to respect and deference, and whose extensive influence is upon the whole favourable to the general happiness. As in consequence therefore of free enquiry just and liberal sentiments will ultimately prevail amongst the higher ranks of society, those sentiments will sooner or later infallibly diffuse themselves amongst the lower classes of mankind; not as the result of rational conviction indeed, so much as of that irresistible influence which must always accompany superiority of knowledge and station. I do not however mean to insinuate that all attempts to enlighten the minds of the multitude are useless or absurd:—such arguments as they are capable of comprehending, and such as have any tendency to enlarge their sphere of comprehension, ought undoubtedly to be exhibited in the most conspicuous point of view. A little knowledge is said to be a dangerous thing: but I believe total ignorance is much more so. By unremitted efforts to instruct and enlighten mankind, the number of competent judges must continually increase, and the minds of the multitude will be gradually prepared for the reception of those truths which they may be unequal to the investigation of. If the majority of Christians in this enlightened country are not properly qualified to decide in controversies of faith, certainly those

those of Spain and Portugal are much less so: There are degrees of ignorance; and every advance in knowledge is favourable to virtue and happiness; but it does not appear to me *advisable*, because the Church of Rome extravagantly claims a right to judge for every private Christian, to embarrass the question by maintaining that every private Christian is qualified to judge for himself. The right to judge is indeed unquestionable; but the ability to exercise that right is quite another thing; and though I do think it infinitely better that the most illiterate *Christian* under Heaven should take upon him to decide upon the most difficult questions in Theology, rather than fancy himself under an obligation of conscience to submit to the decisions of any other man or body of men, and though such an illiterate Christian may undoubtedly be a very upright judge, I hope I am not, by any principle of Protestantism, compelled to acknowledge him to be a *second Daniel*; or even to allow that the majority of those who pass under the general denomination of Christians, and who may be very good Christians, but whose worldly occupations and modes of life leave them no leisure for literary pursuits, ought to be considered as competent to decide upon questions which they have neither opportunity nor ability to discuss.

ESSAY XIV.

Reflections upon EDUCATION.

THERE are two very opposite opinions prevailing in the world respecting human life; one is, that *life is a jest*; and for the benefit and instruction of posterity, this maxim has been recorded on a monument placed amidst the venerable remains of all that mankind have been taught to call good and great. The other is, that *life is not a jest*, but a most serious and important reality; that though the duration of our temporal existence is short and transitory, the manner in which it is passed is in the highest degree momentous; for if, as various natural phenomena seem to indicate, and as Christianity expressly affirms, we are destined by our omnipotent Creator for a future and an eternal life, and the present state should be only the first stage of our existence, our future happiness or misery may, nay, must depend upon those good or evil propensities and dispositions, which, in our passage through this world, we must inevitably contract. This connection between the present and a future state of existence, adds a dignity and solemnity unspeakably interesting to the vain and transient scenes of this mortal life; and

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by this means a principle of action is implanted in the mind, far more powerful, as well as noble, than any which temporal motives can possibly inspire. To those who entertain no such expectation or belief, life *must* appear comparatively a jest, an ænigma far more inexplicable than that of the Sphinx. The present state of things, independently considered, exhibits a scene which we cannot possibly reconcile to our ideas of the natural and moral perfections of the Deity. By recurring to the celebrated Essay on Man, we may easily be convinced how inadequate were the powers of a great Philosopher and Poet in conjunction for the accomplishment of that purpose. The result of the whole bears no proportion to the astonishing display of magnificence and wisdom which we discover in the investigation of the several parts; and if man, lord of this lower world, is himself to sink into annihilation almost as soon as he is brought into existence, what end or purpose worthy of the great Creator is answered by this wonderful exertion of Divine power? Surely it may be said, "Man walketh in a vain show;" and the wisest of the human race might well exclaim, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Nevertheless, though men who have been accustomed to indulge the sublime and elevated sensations which a prospect of immortality is calculated to excite would, if totally deprived of that glorious hope, be inclined to regard the present scene of things as wretchedly trifling and contemptible, yet to those

those who have never extended their views beyond the limits of the present life, the scenes before them will undoubtedly appear highly important and interesting; and a ribband, a title, or a white wand, have been as eagerly pursued by some, as knowledge, virtue, and everlasting happiness, by others.

In the celebrated letters of Lord Chesterfield, we see, with a mixture of pity and indignation, a man of high station, a man of parts, of observation and reflection, who does not appear, even in the decline of life, to have raised his thoughts or wishes beyond that species of happiness which is to be derived from temporal distinctions; of which he had himself experienced the vanity, but which he nevertheless urges his son to pursue with such intemperate ardour, that honour, virtue, and reputation, are to be sacrificed without hesitation at the shrine of the idol which his Lordship has set up. To say nothing of the preposterous nature of his Lordship's plan of education in other respects; of the absurdity of supposing that mankind could be made the dupes of a boy; of the absurdity of urging a youth, destitute of ambition, or superiority of talents, and labouring under peculiar disadvantages, to aim at the highest honours of the State; of the absurdity of educating a youth in a foreign country, who was afterwards to seek for advancement at home; of the absurdity of endeavouring to excite that ardent spirit of emulation by threats and menaces, which could only be kindled

dled by the flame of genius ;—To say nothing of these, and of a thousand other absurdities, it is impossible to pardon the total want of principle which pervades the whole detestable system. In a few words, it may be thus explained. Life is a jest ; therefore, to aim at the advancement of human happiness, as your grand object, and at the approbation of your Maker as your ultimate reward, must of course be ridiculous. To put on the appearance of generosity, humanity, and disinterestedness, is indeed no bad policy ; but the sole end which you ought ever to pursue, either directly or indirectly, is the promotion of your own interest. Many things are useful or valuable as means ; but the great end to which they are all to be considered as subservient, is to rise in the world ; for which purpose you need not scruple to make use of the established modes of the court ; artifice, dissimulation, and debauchery. Vice and virtue are antiquated distinctions ; do not perplex yourself by attending to them ; the grand distinction, which it is necessary to keep continually in view, is between that which is fashionable and that which is vulgar. So far as virtue is connected with fashion, it is to be followed ; so far as vice implies vulgarity, it is to be shunned. There are some things, however, of universal and perpetual obligation ; and though a strict observance of the articles of the Decalogue may be dispensed with, never hope for advancement, or even for pardon, if you fail to enter gracefully into a room,

room, to dance a good minuet, to make a genteel bow, to pare your nails close, and to keep your teeth clean.

Having thus freely declared my disapprobation of a plan I regard as essentially wrong, I shall concisely state my sentiments respecting that which I believe to be right. I am clearly of opinion, that the culture of the human mind cannot commence at too early a period. An infant who has attained to the use of language is capable of receiving numberless ideas; and it is of great importance that the first ideas with which the mind of a child is impressed, should be such as are favourable to virtue. The lights of reason begins to dawn much sooner than is perhaps generally imagined; and the difference between children who have not passed the years of infancy, with respect both to virtue and knowledge, is such as can scarcely be believed but by those who have examined them with philosophical attention. Never was there an idea more monstrously absurd and pernicious than that started by Rousseau, respecting the propriety of keeping children in ignorance till they have attained to an age in which they may judge without prejudice. Ignorance in this case can only mean ignorance of what is good; for if the blossoms of virtue and knowledge do not appear in consequence of early diligence in sowing the seed, the weeds of idleness and vice will infallibly overspread the soil; weeds

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which it will afterwards be found difficult if not impossible to eradicate; besides, if the human mind could be retained in a state of perfect neutrality to the age specified by Rousseau, how absurd is it to expect that it should then be capable of deciding upon questions which have divided mankind for ages. In fact, the first opinions we embrace, at whatever time of life we may commence our enquiries, are, and must be, those of our immediate instructors: Nor is the evil in the least diminished by delaying the period of that commencement. Happy is it when those instructors encourage their pupils impartially to investigate the opinions which they inculcate, and take a real satisfaction in diffusing the liberal spirit of free enquiry and unbounded discussion.

I acknowledge myself an advocate for a very high degree of indulgence in the treatment of youth. Some very worthy and respectable people have unfortunately imbibed a notion, that the parental authority ought to be exercised with rigour, and that implicit obedience is almost the only lesson which needs to be inculcated. Of the fatal effects of this plan experience exhibits the most melancholy proofs. Virtue is indeed with such persons the great object of this, as it ought to be of every plan of Education; but it is associated with ideas so gloomy, it presents an aspect so harsh and disgusting, that youth, naturally averse to seriousness, and much more to austerities, flies to vice as to a refuge; and

and at that critical period of life when the restraints so long impatiently submitted to, must at last suffer relaxation, is too often seen to throw off every appearance of regard to that which has ever been the object of its secret aversion. I presume I scarcely need to say, that I do not mean to recommend that absurd and pernicious species of indulgence by which temporary caprice is gratified at the expence of future happiness, but that which aims and is calculated to excite affection and confidence. All recreations, tending either to health or rational amusement, should be not only allowed but encouraged:—An unrestrained intercourse of conversation, promoted by kindness, condescension, and a flattering appearance of regard and attention. The first principles of knowledge and virtue may be inculcated in a thousand different ways, by a skilful and watchful instructor; and the understanding will make rapid and vigorous shoots where it has free scope to expand itself in all directions; and if the early blossoms appear somewhat luxuriant, it is far better than that “Nature’s wild vigour” “working at the root” should be chilled by neglect, or blasted by severity. Mildness and indulgence, guided by good sense and prudence, on the part of the parent, must necessarily generate affection and gratitude in the breasts of the children; and I will venture to lay it down as an almost infallible maxim, that if children are chargeable with a failure of duty in those re-

spects, it is owing to some radical error in the conduct of the parents.

As to the long-contested question respecting the superior eligibility of a public or private Education, cannot but give a decided opinion in favour of the former. All the powers and faculties of the mind have a freer scope and a wider range in a public than a private seminary; and a man who has had the advantage of a public Education, will in general retain through life a certain superiority over another of equal abilities and knowledge brought up under the care of a domestic tutor. I think, also, that with respect to learning, *i. e.* classical learning, public schools have a manifest advantage over private seminaries; and though the general rule, in this case, must after all admit of many exceptions, and the true question is not, whether a public or private Education is best, but whether one or the other is best for a particular individual; yet I repeat, that I have no doubt but, for the majority, a public Education will be found most eligible. In order to secure the advantages which may, with proper care and caution, be expected from this mode of Education, the most assiduous endeavours should, doubtless, be used, from the earliest dawn of reason, to inculcate just and noble principles of action; and for some years previous to the entrance of a youth into this interesting scene, perhaps from the age of seven or eight, to twelve or fourteen,

fourteen, he would be most advantageously placed at a private school, under the care of a tutor, not only qualified to direct his literary pursuits, but who would watch, with anxious solicitude, over his manners and morals. Not that the parental attention should suffer any suspension upon this account; by that mild wisdom which secures the affections while it informs the understanding, much may be effected without encroaching upon the province, or assuming the authority, of a tutor, at this period, when the intellectual powers advance rapidly towards maturity, and knowledge already begins to be pursued as the means of mental gratification.

It is a very frequent subject of complaint, that little besides the learned languages is attended to at the public schools; but I think without sufficient foundation. At the age of thirteen or fourteen, which seems to be the proper period for entering into those seminaries, no inconsiderable stock of knowledge may reasonably be supposed, in a mind properly cultivated, to have been already attained. A general idea of ancient and modern History, the first elements of Geographical and Mathematical science, a perfect familiarity with the French language, and a considerable proficiency in the Greek and Latin tongues, may at least be presumed. The proper business of a public school is to perfect a youth, thus prepared, in classical

sical literature; and surely it is not possible to read the higher classics without acquiring, at the same time with an accurate knowledge of the languages, a knowledge of a far superior kind;—a knowledge of facts, characters, and opinions, connected with the most distinguished and illustrious periods of the general history of mankind. When an intimate acquaintance with the learned languages, and with those various kinds of knowledge which are to be derived from a study of the most celebrated writers in those languages is acquired, the proper period arrives for a removal to the Universities, where a regular superstructure may be erected upon the extensive and solid foundation which has been previously laid. It is with reluctance that I presume to pass any censure upon the general mode of instruction adopted by those learned and noble seminaries: I am well convinced that with right dispositions, and with a mind properly prepared and cultivated, a youth may make as rapid improvements in every branch of useful knowledge at Oxford or Cambridge as at any seat of learning in Europe: Of this, the many great and illustrious characters formed there, afford the most honourable and decisive proofs. Surely, however, in Christian seminaries of Education, it would not be improper to pay a somewhat greater degree of attention to the inculcating of the principles of the Christian religion. It is most certain that,

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excellent as it is in itself, and firm as is the evidence on which it stands, it can never be expected to produce any considerable effect where it has not been regularly and systematically taught. If the philosophers of Greece and Rome made it their great object to explain, and thought their time well employed in inculcating the tenets of the several sects to which they were attached, can it be thought unworthy the attention, or beneath the dignity of Christian philosophers, to explain and inculcate the tenets of a divine revelation? In fact this ought to be a primary object of Education in a Christian country; but then it ought to be conducted in the true spirit of philosophy as well as of Christianity. What should we have said had we been informed, that it was the practice of the Grecian sages to exact from their pupils, at their admission into the celebrated Schools of Antiquity, an express declaration of their assent to those very tenets which were to be made the subject of future enquiry? How preposterous would it have appeared to them, —how contrary to the spirit of philosophy, had the public profession of an exploded system been extorted from them by the State, in order to qualify them for the office of public instructors! —A system originally framed in an age of comparative darkness, by men in no respect more, but in many respects less capable of forming a judgment

judgment agreeable to truth than themselves: How would they have disdained to fetter their ardent minds, which in the pursuit of truth so often "passed the flaming bounds of place and time" in such ignoble shackles!—How would they have felt themselves degraded, and how low would they have sunk in their own estimation, by such mental prostitution! Yet this is the wretched, the barbarous plan which still prevails in what we are pleased to call this enlightened age and country. It is a certain and melancholy truth, that the most able and intelligent men in our Universities are afraid to invite the attention of youth to the free investigation of the principles of Christianity, because by such an investigation the inconsistency of their own conduct would appear in too striking and painful a point of view; and very serious inconveniencies would arise from exciting in the minds of those who are intended for public teachers of that religion, doubts and scruples respecting the lawfulness of complying with those conditions which the State has unhappily thought necessary to enjoin.

I cannot, in this cursory sketch, entirely omit to speak of the fashion which is become so universal—of sending young men of fortune, after they have taken their degree at the University, to make what is called the *grand tour*. No doubt many very plausible, and some very just things may be said of the advantages to

to be derived from foreign travel; but I am well persuaded, that in order to attain those advantages, it is necessary to have a mind much better prepared and cultivated than the generality of our young men of fashion possess. To expose an inexperienced youth, who has a very slight tincture of knowledge, and no true relish for it, whose passions are strong, and in whose mind no fixed principles of virtue are implanted, to counteract their influence—to expose a youth of such a description to the temptations which he must inevitably encounter in such a situation, is to expose him to almost certain ruin. The advice or remonstrances of a governor can no more avail to stem the torrent of dissipation and vice, than a bulrush can stop the inundations of the Nile. In fact, the very idea of appointing a governor implies an absurdity. If a youth is so devoid of sense or of virtue as to need a governor, he is not in such a state of mind as to be capable of improvement by travel. If Education has been properly conducted, the most dangerous and critical years of life are passed, at that period when it is usual to commence traveller. The very term governor is justly displeasing to the ear of youth now arriving at the age of manhood—it ought to be exchanged for that of companion and friend. “Let your son,” I would say to the parent whom I was permitted to advise, “be sole master of his own actions;—free from every

every species of restraint and controul, and place your entire dependence upon those principles of virtue which you have previously and anxiously inculcated, and upon that sense of honour which is so powerful in youthful minds; which is so happily calculated to aid and strengthen virtue when it meets her, and which, as the poet observes, often "imitates her actions where she is not." I own I place but little stress upon those external accomplishments and graces of behaviour which some suppose only to be acquired in foreign Courts. To me the most pleasing manners are such as are truly English; and I have known many persons, who have never seen Versailles or the Louvre, who possess an elegance and urbanity not to be exceeded by those who have been presented at every Court in Europe. Foreign manners are by no means congenial to the taste of the English; and when the behaviour of those who have been accustomed to good company is apparently changed, in consequence of their residence abroad, it is generally changed for the worse. I speak not of those who are commonly called *travelled coxcombs*, and who are so justly the subject of universal ridicule, but the behaviour of even men of sense and fashion, when they have in any degree contracted the air and manners of foreigners, is, generally speaking, so far displeasing. What may be thought grace at Paris, at London may appear grimace; and it must be confessed that
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travellers of real knowledge and merit are sometimes apt to assume an air of superiority and self-importance, than which nothing can be more disgusting, or can tend more to excite the contempt of others, who have employed their time to, perhaps, at least equal advantage in their native country.

Upon the whole it appears to me, that a longer time spent at the University, with occasional excursions to the Continent, would be far preferable to the prevailing custom of wandering about Europe for two or three years successively, till in many instances an unaffected pleasing Englishman becomes metamorphosed into a conceited and aukward foreigner:—At least it would be happy for the Continent, and much for the credit of our own country, if a stop was put to that egress of riotous and dissipated English youth, which at present is so justly a subject of complaint abroad; and who, to the evil dispositions they carry out with them, add the follies and vices of every different clime and country which they visit. When such men make it their boast that “Europe they saw,” let them recollect that “Europe saw them too;” and they will have little reason to indulge any emotions of vanity derived from this imaginary source of superiority.

ESSAY XV.

Remarks on the XXI. Chapter of Locke's Essay on
HUMAN UNDERSTANDING.

PERHAPS no writer can be named, of ancient or of modern times, to whom mankind are under more extensive obligation than Mr. Locke. By his *Essay on Human Understanding*, he has effected what may well be called a complete revolution of opinion in metaphysics. Metaphysics, which had so long and so justly lain under the reproach of bewildering the understanding in a maze of words destitute of real meaning:—Metaphysics, which had so long discoursed in an unintelligible jargon, became in the hands of Mr. Locke a most interesting and important branch of true philosophy. By his *Treatises on Government and Toleration*, he fixed the civil and religious rights of mankind upon a firm and immovable basis; and in his *Theological Works* he exhibited the reasonableness of Christianity, and the solidity of the evidence upon which our holy religion is founded, in a clear, perspicuous, and convincing point of view. No one can hold the name and the memory of that great man in higher
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re veneration than myself; but at the same time I would no more submit to take any opinion upon trust from Mr. Locke than from Spinoza or Hobbes; and whenever I discern, or think I discern, an error in the writings of a man of such distinguished eminence, I am the more desirous of its being properly animadverted upon and confuted, in order to prevent its acquiring a sanction from the reputation of its Author. This is the only apology I think necessary for hazarding a few observations upon that celebrated chapter of Mr. Locke's Essay, which treats "Of Power," so far as relates to his representation of the nature of the Human Will, and of the Liberty or Necessity of Human Actions. The clearness and precision of Mr. Locke's ideas, on those various subjects which he has undertaken to discuss, are, notwithstanding the frequent embarrassment of his style, so justly and universally acknowledged, that one cannot but be astonished at the obscurity and perplexity in which this interesting topic, under his management of it, seems involved; and it is impossible to point out a more striking contrast than this chapter on Power, by Mr. Locke, forms to the "View of the doctrine of Philosophical Necessity," by Dr. Hartley; which I regard as a masterpiece of composition, and from which it is evident that the most profound reasonings never need to lose sight of those indispensable requisites of good writing, conciseness, simplicity, and perspicuity. I cannot but suspect that Mr. Locke entered upon the investigation of this celebrated question with

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reluctance,

reluctance, and that he deviated into obscurity and inconsistency in treating upon it, from an apprehension of incurring the odium of favouring the philosophical system of Mr. Hobbes, who had some years before very ably defended the hypothesis of Philosophical Necessity in an express treatise upon the subject, and who was perhaps himself indebted for his accurate knowledge of it to the writings of Spinoza. Now it is well known that Spinoza and Hobbes were reputed Atheists, and the doctrine of Necessity was, at the time Mr. Locke wrote, almost universally confounded with Fatalism, which was justly regarded as totally irreconcilable with the doctrine of a Divine Providence, and equally at variance with the natural and moral attributes of the Deity. However unworthy of a great Philosopher, I have little doubt but that Mr. Locke, in the investigation of this question, was considerably influenced by the prevailing prejudice against this tenet. I believe it biassed his judgment, so far as to prevent him from admitting the principle in its full extent, though he has admitted all the premises which are necessary to arrive at the conclusion; and I fear it induced him to adopt the dissingenuous artifice of using ambiguous language, in order to disguise the impression which it is evident the arguments of the Necessitarians had really made upon his mind. In a word, he appears neither to have attained to clear ideas upon the subject, nor to have expressed the ideas he had with any degree of precision or perspicuity. The free agency of man may be considered

sidered in two different points of view—either popular or philosophical. In the popular sense it is unquestionably true; in the philosophical sense it is demonstrably false: but Mr. Locke obviously confounds these two different views of the subject; and though he admits all the premises from which the conclusions in favour of Philosophical Necessity are deduced, he refuses to acknowledge the justness of those conclusions, because there is a sense in which men may be considered as free agents.

In this chapter there is much extraneous matter; and Mr. Locke wanders frequently from the subject he professes to discuss, to which he never reverts without great apparent reluctance: but though there are in his digressive observations very objectionable passages, I shall confine my remarks to those arguments and assertions which bear an immediate relation to the point. "Liberty," says Mr. Locke, sect. 8. "is a power in any agent to do or to forbear any particular action, according to the determination or thought of the mind." This definition is consonant to the popular view of the subject; and it may be called practical Liberty, which no Philosopher ever pretended to call in question. Metaphysical Liberty is a power of forming opposite determinations in the same precise situation. A man in any given circumstances may undoubtedly act as he wills or pleases; but then the act, whatever it be, is a definite act, and in the same precise previous circumstances the same act would invariably take place; for the act results from the previous circumstances, and

perfect uniformity in the cause must produce perfect uniformity in the effect. Whatever the ignorant or the vulgar may fancy, therefore, throughout the entire series of causes and effects, nothing could possibly have happened different from what has actually taken place. The course of events is fixed and immutable, and thoughts, volitions, and actions, proceed in one uninterrupted concatenation from the beginning to the end of time, agreeably to the laws originally established by the great Creator; and it is as impossible to disturb the regular progression of causes and effects in the mental as in the material world. A river may as soon be made to flow back to its fountain, as volitions can be exempted from the necessitating influence of motives.

Mr. Locke farther tells us, and very justly, sect. 2. that "voluntary is not opposed to necessary, but to "involuntary;" that is, in other words, that there is no real contrariety in the ideas conveyed by the terms voluntary and necessary, but that they may both be predicated of the same action. A man is said to act voluntarily when he is under no external constraint; but though he acts voluntarily, he may and must act necessarily, if the action is determined by motives previously existing in his own breast. A man of a charitable disposition, for instance, bestows a benefaction for the relief of some indigent object in distress. The act is no doubt voluntary, but it is likewise, strictly speaking, necessary; for in the precise situation of mind in which the gift

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was bestowed, he was irresistibly influenced by motives of generosity to confer this donation: but it may be said, he could have withheld it if he had pleased. No doubt he could; but the question is, How he could have pleased to withhold his benefaction at the very moment in which he was pleased to bestow it? So far then Mr. Locke maintains nothing inconsistent with the principles of Philosophical Necessity; nay, he makes the same distinctions, and defends them in the same manner, that the Necessarians themselves are accustomed to do.

Again, Mr. Locke observes, sect. 13. that "where the power to act or forbear, according to the direction of thought, is wanting, there Necessity takes place." Most certainly it does. In that case even popular Liberty is wanting. But philosophical Necessity may take place, where the power to act or forbear, according to the direction of the thought, is not wanting. In any given or definite situation of mind, we may either act or forbear to act, as we please. This all allow; but in the same precise situation of mind we cannot possibly do both. If, in the first instance, I determine to act, let me be placed precisely in the same situation once more, and I must inevitably form the same determination, as, upon the contrary supposition, the determination not to act must be equally limited and definite. When we say, with a reference to any particular case, a man has power to act or to forbear as he pleases, &c. there is in fact no uncertainty in the nature of the thing;

and the seeming uncertainty implied in the expression denotes only our own ignorance of the event. The place in which a billiard ball must finally rest, after being struck, is necessarily determined by the laws of motion, though if it is not obstructed by any external impediment, we say in common language, that it is at liberty to settle upon any part of the billiard table.

"If this be so," continues Mr. Locke, sect. 14. "I leave it to be considered, whether it may not help to put an end to that long agitated and unreasonable, because unintelligible, question, Whether man's will be free or no? It is as insignificant to ask, whether man's will be free? as to ask, whether his sleep be swift, or his virtue square? Liberty being as little applicable to the will, as motion to sleep, or figure to virtue. Liberty is a power which can belong only to agents, and cannot be an attribute of the will, which is also but a power." Now it is obvious to remark, that it is one thing, to object to the discussion of a question, as insignificant in itself; and another, to object to a particular statement of it, as improper. The question accurately stated is, doubtless, not whether the will, but whether the man or agent be free; and Mr. Locke surely could not flatter himself that he had done much towards putting an end to the question respecting free agency, by merely proposing a more accurate statement of it, though the former statement was by no means, as he asserts, either un-
reasonable

reasonable or unintelligible. By the question, "Whether the will be free?" was, and still is, universally understood, whether the man or intelligent agent be free in willing, or in forming volitions; and I never heard of any advocates for philosophical Liberty, who pretended that the will was free, as contra-distinguished from the agent willing; so that this observation resolves itself into little better than a quibble. To the question then, "Whether a man be free?" Mr. Locke, sect. 21. answers to the same effect as before, "that a man is as free as it is possible for freedom to make him, who possesses the power of acting or not acting, by the determination of his own thoughts; for how, says he, can we think any one freer than to have the power to do what he will?" True; so say the Necessitarians; but they maintain that this is perfectly consistent with their grand axiom, that "volitions must be definite in definite circumstances." "But, says Mr. Locke, "freedom, unless it reaches farther than this, will not serve the turn: concerning human Liberty, therefore, this question is farther raised, Whether a man be free to will? which I think, says he, is what is meant, when it is disputed whether the will be free." No doubt it is; and this proves with how little justice he represents it as an unintelligible question. "As to that, he replies, "a man in respect of willing cannot be free; for, Liberty consisting in a power to act or not to act, it is absolutely necessary

in any supposed case, that he prefer the one to the other; upon which preference or volition the action, or its forbearance, certainly follows." This, without doubt, is perfectly consonant to the principles of philosophical Necessity. Nay, this argument is always urged by the advocates of that hypothesis as irrefragable; for the action, as Mr. Locke observes, certainly following the volition, and volitions being founded upon previous ideas of preference, from precisely similar situations of mind, volitions and actions precisely similar must inevitably result.

"But the next thing demanded, says Mr. Locke, sect. 25. is, Whether a man be at liberty to will which of the two he pleases, motion or rest?" A question of which the absurdity is manifest. It is to ask, Whether a man can will what he wills, or be pleased with what he is pleased with?—A question which needs no answer." True; and it is a question, therefore, which Mr. Locke might have spared himself the trouble of proposing. It is self-evident, that man has the liberty or rather the power to will that which he wills; and all that the Necessitarians pretend is, that man has not the Liberty or power of willing that which he does not will. "In this, then," he repeats, sect. 28, "consists freedom; in our being able to act or not to act, according as we shall chuse or will." Thus far then Mr. Locke coincides with the advocates for philosophical Necessity, though his concessions are generally involved in a cloud of words; and he is still desirous, as it should seem, of ranking
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amongst the friends of philosophical Liberty. Our actions he allows to be necessarily determined by our volitions. He now goes on to ask, sect. 29, "What determines the will?" To which he answers, "The mind or the intelligent agent itself, exerting its power this or that particular way; or, more explicitly, the mind is determined by motives grounded upon feelings of satisfaction or uneasiness." This account is entirely consistent with the system of Necessity; for the advocates of that hypothesis insist as strongly as Mr. Locke, that our actions are the result of our volitions, which are themselves produced by motives, or by the mind actuated by a regard to motives; and as those motives were themselves produced by causes previously existing, it follows that motives, volitions, and actions, are all the definite effects of definite causes, and that they are all links of that

— "golden everlasting chain,
"Whose strong embrace holds heaven, and earth, and main."

It has, I think, been sufficiently demonstrated, that Mr. Locke's principles respecting human agency did not in reality differ from those of Hartley, Leibnitz, Collins, &c. and that, in order to have been consistent, he ought to have avowed himself a believer in the doctrine of philosophical Necessity: but this, as it seems, he was previously determined against; and a very curious expedient, it must be owned, he has discovered, to serve as a salvo for his reputation in this critical dilemma.

dilemma. "It is natural," says he, sect. 47. "to suppose, that the greatest and most pressing uneasiness or motive should determine the will to the next action; and so it does for the most part, but not always: for the mind has a power to suspend the execution of its desires; is at liberty to consider, examine, and weigh them; and in this lies the Liberty that man has. This seems to me the source of all Liberty; and in this seems to consist what is improperly stiled free-will." Sect. 52. "This is the hinge on which turns the Liberty of intellectual beings; all the Liberty of which men are capable lies in this, that they can suspend their desires; all we can do is, to hold our wills undetermined, till we have examined the good and evil of what we desire. What follows after that, follows in a chain of consequences linked one to another," &c. &c. Now, if Mr. Locke had been writing a practical treatise of morality, I am far from denying that he would have done well to have laid so great a stress upon the power we have of suspending our determinations. I never heard of any Necessarian writer who was in the least inclined to call it in question, or who, upon all proper occasions, was not disposed to urge men to the practice of it as much as others; but that Mr. Locke should introduce it into a philosophical work, and should fancy that he had established the hypothesis of philosophical Liberty, merely by proving that man has a power of suspending his volitions, is not a little astonishing. The argument

ment is so futile, that were it not advanced by so great a man, it could scarcely be deemed, as Mr. Locke has truly said of an absurd question relating to the will, proposed by himself, to deserve an answer. "Volitions, says Mr. Locke, are determined by motives." Of course, therefore, say the Necessitarians, the strongest motive must determine the volition. "For the most part," replies Mr. Locke, "it does so, but not always; for the mind has a power to suspend its determinations, to weigh, examine, and deliberate, before it finally resolves," &c. Who denies all this? But surely a degree of sagacity far inferior to that possessed by Mr. Locke might suffice to convince us, that a determination to suspend a volition is a mental act, no less real than the final determination itself: that it is subject to the same laws, and can no more be produced without a motive than any other volition. We are no less actuated by motives, and no less determined by the strongest motive, when we form a resolution to deliberate or to suspend our final judgment, than in any other supposable case; and to pretend that we are ever influenced by the weaker motive to reject the stronger, is an absurdity almost too gross for refutation. If we determine to act, there must be some motive influencing the determination; and that motive, whatever it may be, is without question the strongest motive, because it *does* influence the determination. On the other hand, if we determine not to act, or to suspend action, the determination must likewise be founded on some motive

five which, so long as it influences the volition, is the predominant, that is, the strongest motive. Of what advantage then to the Anti-necessarian hypothesis is this boasted power of suspension? It is a power perfectly analogous to all the other powers of the human mind; a power which cannot be exerted independently of motives: and, so far as it is the result of motives, the Necessitarians are far from calling in question its reality; and they are as well convinced as Mr. Locke of its utility. The inconsistency of Mr. Locke upon this subject is very remarkable: he repeatedly tells us, and truly tells us, that Liberty consists only in a power of acting, or forbearing to act: but, upon reconsidering his own assertions, he is apparently alarmed at the coincidence of his system with that of certain unpopular writers; and he must therefore find or make a difference, or at least a distinction, between them. So, after much obscure and useless prefatory matter, he retracts what he had before positively affirmed, and informs us, that Liberty consists in the power of suspending our volitions. One might reasonably suppose, that this power was included in the power of forbearing to act; but we are told there is a very important distinction between them; for the power of forbearance cannot be exercised but in consequence of the prevalence of some motive; but the power of suspension may, it seems, be exerted in direct opposition to the prevailing motive. Surely the hypothesis of philosophical
Liberty

Liberty never had a more weak and feeble advocate! The truth is, that throughout this whole chapter, whenever Mr. Locke argues clearly, ably, and satisfactorily, he argues in defence of the system of Necessity, or of those principles which have an intimate and inseparable connection with it: whenever, on the other hand, he argues loosely, obscurely, and inconsistently, it is in defence of Liberty: and his embarrassment is so apparent, that it leads to an irresistible suspicion that he was not unconscious of the futility of his own reasonings; and his conduct can be accounted for, only by supposing that he had himself imbibed a great share of the popular dread and abhorrence of the system of Necessity, on account of its supposed dangerous and pernicious consequences, or that he resolved to sacrifice in this instance to popular prejudice, in order to render his work more generally acceptable and useful. Perhaps both motives might concur to influence him, but neither of them were worthy of so great a man; for truth ought not to be sacrificed to any views of temporary utility: and in this case, I am of opinion that the truth is highly beneficial, and that it deserves a very favourable and welcome reception. The dangerous consequences which many respectable persons are so apprehensive of, I regard as entirely chimerical: It is evident that the doctrine of Necessity cannot, like the doctrine of Predestination or Fatalism, have any dangerous influence upon the bulk of mankind, for it is perfectly consistent with the popular ideas

ideas of Liberty, with the use of human endeavours, of promises, threatenings, exhortations, rewards, and punishments. The Liberty of doing as they please, is the only Liberty which mankind in general can ever be brought to comprehend; so that the doctrine of Philosophical Liberty, if true, as to them, is useless; and it must be allowed likewise upon the same grounds, that the doctrine of Philosophical Necessity, if true, is as to them perfectly harmless: but to those who are capable of investigating the question, and who are induced by arguments of which they really comprehend the force, to embrace this opinion, it is not only harmless but highly beneficial: it opens new and extensive views of the divine government and administration; it enforces reverence to God, and benevolence to man, by motives far more powerful than any other system can possibly supply; and it excites the most animating expectations of a happy termination of all those mournful and calamitous scenes with which we are at present surrounded; and exhibits to our intellectual view a glorious, however distant, prospect of a state in which, to use the beautiful language of holy writ, "God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes: and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away, and behold! all things are become new."

ESSAY XVI.

REVIEW of the REIGN of CHARLES II.

IN a former Essay I have endeavoured to exhibit a just, however general, view of the means by which a great and magnanimous Princess, who acceded to the crown in a crisis of peculiar difficulty and danger, extricated herself from her political embarrassments, and attained to the summit of temporal fame and prosperity. It may not, perhaps, be entirely useless to reverse the picture, and shew how a Monarch, who was placed in a situation beyond all comparison more favourable at the commencement of his reign, became an object of scorn and detestation long before the close of it. Charles II. was endowed by nature with qualities which gave him a just title to popularity; and his wonderful restoration to the crown of his ancestors, amidst the universal acclamations of his subjects, after twenty years of calamity and confusion, seemed to prognosticate a reign of unexampled felicity and glory. Adversity has been styled the School of Princes; and he possessed a capacity which might have enabled him to derive the most essential benefits from its discipline. His knowledge, though not extensive, or profound,

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was of that species which in public life is of the highest importance; and which, if it had been rightly applied, would have conferred an honourable distinction upon his character. He was well acquainted with history and politics; he understood the interests of his country, and well knew the rank she was entitled to hold amongst the powers of Europe. He was possessed of the most insinuating and graceful address; and without departing from the dignity of his station, he knew how to charm all who approached his person, by the unaffected condescension and engaging affability of his manners. Notwithstanding, however, the flattering appearances which raised so high the hopes of his subjects, and the expectations of the world, without being chargeable with or even suspected of those enormous crimes which blacken the character of a Nero or a Caligula, or in modern times of a Christian II. an Alexander VI. or a Richard III. he incurred before the conclusion of his reign the indignation, the odium, and contempt of every friend of liberty and of virtue.

The declaration from Breda, the appointment of the Earl of Clarendon to the post of Prime Minister, the admission of Annesley, Ashley-Cooper, Hollis, Robarts, and Manchester, the leaders of the Presbyterian party, to the Royal Councils, and the act of indemnity which was passed by the convention-parliament, were all measures of government well calculated to conciliate the affections of the nation, and to restore peace, order,
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and general harmony: nay, the behaviour of the King, respecting the act of indemnity, seemed to exhibit a degree of generosity, to which the whole course of his future reign furnishes no similar instance. When the Earl of Bristol moved an exception to the proposed indemnity, of such a nature as in a great measure to defeat the design of it, the King came to the House of Peers, and, in very explicit terms, expressed his disapprobation of this step; and, in consequence of the royal interposition, the act passed without any farther delay or alteration. During the sitting of the Convention Parliament, in which the presbyterian interest predominated, and which regarded the proceedings of the government with a watchful and jealous eye, affairs were conducted with prudence and moderation. That assembly was dissolved in December 1660; and in May 1661, a new parliament was convened, which quickly appeared to be of a complexion very different from the preceding one, and from which the perfidy of the King, and the violent and wretched bigotry of the Earl of Clarendon, might expect the highest encouragement and applause. That celebrated minister was certainly possessed of very shining virtues, both in public and private life: his capacity, if not of the first rate, was however not inadequate to his elevated station; and his integrity and probity are universally acknowledged: he had the interests, not only of the King, but of the kingdom, really at heart; and though the measures

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of his administration were often extremely exceptionable, they invariably proceeded from a firm persuasion that they were calculated to promote the welfare and happiness of the community. The grand defect in the character of this nobleman was, a want of liberality and comprehension of mind: he was a religious bigot; a character totally incompatible with that of a great statesman. He was under the influence of a thousand weaknesses and prejudices; his ideas of the nature and extent of regal authority were extravagantly high: he was wholly unacquainted with the principles of toleration; he was haughty, intractable, conceited, and morose; and entirely destitute of that spirit of mild wisdom and enlightened benevolence, which so remarkably distinguished his illustrious successor, the great Lord Somers.

The first act passed by the new parliament, pronounced every person who dared to affirm the King to be a Papist, incapable of holding any employment in church or state; a measure which obviously tended to increase the suspicions already entertained respecting this point. The bishops, who had been previously restored to their spiritual functions, by virtue of the royal prerogative, exercised under colour of the Act of Supremacy, were now admitted to their former stations in parliament, from which they had been so long excluded. The power of the sword, which had been the immediate cause of the civil war, was solemnly relinquished, and the doctrine of non-resistance was explicitly avowed. The

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Crown was invested with a power of regulating, or, rather, of new modelling, all the corporations throughout the kingdom, at pleasure; and all magistrates were obliged to declare, that it was not lawful, upon any pretence whatever, to take up arms against the Crown. All these different measures, however, were but so many preludes to the famous Act of Uniformity, which took place in the same session; and which fell, like a thunderbolt, upon the devoted heads of the presbyterian party; i. e. upon a class of men who constituted, at that period, at least one half of the nation. To exhibit this act in its proper colours, it must be remembered, that the Convention Parliament, which restored the King, was composed chiefly of presbyterians, and that their generosity had so far exceeded the limits of discretion, as to induce them to rely, with unsuspecting confidence, upon the royal declaration from Breda, in which they were flattered with the prospect of a general amnesty and liberty of conscience; and to reject the advice of some of the most sagacious members of that assembly, who were of opinion, that specific conditions should be proposed to the King; who, in that critical situation of his affairs, would gladly have acquiesced in any terms which the general welfare of the community had rendered it prudent or proper to insist upon. By the Act of Uniformity, however, the Church was not only re-established in all her pristine rights, but the terms of conformity were made still more rigorous than in

any former period, with the expresse view of excluding all of the presbyterian denomination from the national communion; in consequence of which, about two thousand of the beneficed clergy voluntarily relinquished their preferments on Bartholomew-Day 1662, when the Act of Uniformity, by a refinement of cruelty, was to take place, in order to prevent those who should resign their livings from making any advantage of their tythes for the preceding year. After making every reasonable allowance for that mixture of adventitious motives by which, in such situations, human nature will be ever in some degree actuated, this must certainly be regarded as an astonishing sacrifice of temporal interest to integrity and conscience, and as exhibiting a noble proof of the deep impression which the Christian religion is capable of making upon the heart, and of the elevation of views and conduct which, in the most trying situations, it is calculated to excite; but when we examine minutely into the reasons upon which this magnanimous secession was founded, we cannot but stand astonished at their extreme frivolousness, and futility, and our admiration is almost annihilated by contempt. The leaders of the presbyterians, who were many of them men of great learning and abilities, did not object to a national establishment, as such; they were far even from professing to disapprove of the government of the church by bishops; to the theological system contained in the Thirty-nine Articles, they were very strongly

strongly attached; and the use of a public formulary of worship they generally regarded, not only as lawful, but expedient: To what, then, did they object? To submit to re-ordination, by which the validity of the prior ordination by a presbytery would virtually be impugned: They could not in conscience consent to kneel at the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; nor could they make use of the sign of the Cross in Baptism; nor prevail upon themselves to bow at the name of Jesus; nor would they countenance the superstitions of the Romish Church, by wearing the ecclesiastical vestments, which they reckoned amongst the detestable abominations of that mother of harlots. It is difficult to determine whether a greater degree of bigotry was discoverable, in insisting upon these petty observances as terms of communion, or in rejecting them as anti-christian and unlawful:—this, however, is certain, that Clarendon, who was now possessed of absolute authority, must have drank deep into the spirit of Laud, to have urged a measure which had a direct tendency to alienate the minds of half the nation from the King's person and government; which plunged a great number of worthy and conscientious men into the depths of indigence and distress, and which laid an extensive foundation for a schism which still subsists, and which has been productive of very pernicious consequences; though it must be acknowledged that much good has likewise resulted from it, but of such a nature, that the faintest idea of it could

never enter within the narrow views of that honest but mistaken minister.

In the summer of 1662, the inauspicious marriage of the King with Catharine, Infanta of Portugal, was concluded. It is not certainly known what part the Chancellor took in this affair: the truth seems to be, that the King had resolved upon this alliance, and the minister therefore was compelled to acquiesce in that which he had too much discernment to approve. The pernicious effects of a catholic alliance were surely sufficiently obvious by the example of the former reign; and how the interests of this kingdom could be promoted by establishing the independency of Portugal, which was the great political consequence to be expected from this union, it was not easy to demonstrate. Spain was already sunk much too low in the scale of power, and nothing could more effectually contribute to confirm the dangerous ascendancy already acquired by France, than this absurd and impolitic measure. In the same year a transaction took place, which has frequently been represented as highly scandalous, and even criminal; I mean, the sale of Dunkirk: it does not, however, I must confess, appear to me in this heinous light. The revenue of the Crown was at this period very narrow, and the expence of maintaining Dunkirk was great; and though it is undeniable that a powerful kingdom cannot, without incurring some disgrace, part with any of its possessions for pecuniary considerations, yet it must be allowed

allowed that Dunkirk was of no real use, and that it was a very heavy burden upon the Crown. The diminution of the national honour, by the sale of the place, was therefore the only reasonable objection to which the cession of it was liable. An unfortunate idea has been long prevalent in this country, that essential benefits are to be derived from the possession of fortresses in foreign kingdoms; and Calais, Dunkirk, Port Mahon, and Gibraltar, have successively been occupied, at an immense expence of blood and treasure, with a view to the attainment of these chimerical advantages. Gibraltar alone, at a moderate computation, has, since the year 1704, when it was first captured, cost this nation upwards of thirty millions sterling.—A few more such conquests, and we are undone!

Before the close of this year, the King exhibited plain indications of that attachment to the catholic religion, which was so remarkable a characteristic of the Stuart family, and which at length terminated in their total ruin. In December the King issued a declaration, in which he expressed his intention of mitigating the rigour of the penal laws, in favour of his peaceable non-conforming subjects, by virtue of his dispensing power; but the House of Commons, who were equally adverse to papists and presbyterians, strongly remonstrating against the proposed indulgence, the King gave the first public proof of that cautious and accommodating spirit, which never forsook him even when

engaged in the prosecution of the deepest and most dangerous designs, by immediately desisting from his project; and, in order to pacify the Parliament, a proclamation was soon after issued against Jesuits and Romish priests. From this time, however, it was observed, that the Earl of Clarendon began to decline from that height of favour he had hitherto enjoyed: the King became sensible, that this inflexible minister could never be brought to support any designs which might be formed, either for the extension of Prerogative or the advancement of Popery. The resolution taken by the Court in the following year, not without the concurrence of the Parliament, and the approbation of the nation in general, to declare war against Holland, evidently marked the declension, or rather the annihilation, of that nobleman's authority.—The King's settled aversion to the manners, government, and religion of the Dutch nation, was the real ground of this war; and the jealousy entertained of those industrious republicans, as commercial rivals, was the cause of its popularity; it was, however, so palpably unjust, that the Chancellor, whose probity remained unshaken in the midst of temptation, openly remonstrated against it, but without any effect. The war, however, was not carried on with that success which was expected: France and Denmark declared in favour of Holland; and the King, notwithstanding the memorable insult he received from the Dutch fleet, commanded by De Ruyter, who in the summer of 1667 failed up the Medway, and burnt

burnt several men of war lying in that river, thought proper to sign a treaty of peace at Breda in July, and to reserve to a more favourable opportunity, the complete gratification of his hatred and revenge. The disgrace of the Chancellor immediately followed; popular prejudices ran high against him; and the King had the baseness and ingratitude to encourage a parliamentary impeachment for high treason against the man to whom he owed the most important obligations, who had been the guide and counsellor of his youth, and in whom he had once placed the most unlimited confidence:—happily he found means to escape into France; where he spent the remainder of his life in philosophic and dignified retirement.

The first political measure of the Court, after this event, has met with very great and deserved applause. I refer to the famous triple alliance concluded between England, Holland, and Sweden, for the avowed purpose of putting a stop to the military progress of the French Monarch; whose power began, about this time, to appear extremely formidable, and who had, in contempt of every appearance of justice, entered the Spanish Low Countries with a numerous army, and threatened to make an entire conquest of those rich and extensive provinces. Louis, however, did not chuse to risque a rupture with this potent confederacy; and for a short time England, in consequence of this spirited conduct, appeared in her proper station, as the great bulwark of the common liberties of Europe. Some faint attempts

attempts were also now made by Buckingham, the new minister, to procure a relaxation of the terms of conformity: but the temper of the Commons appeared totally adverse to every idea of that nature. They even inflicted additional penalties upon Nonconformists; and, by a remarkable clause in the act passed against conventicles, the malignant spirit by which they were actuated, is strikingly manifested. If any dispute should arise with respect to the construction of the act, the judges are directed, contrary to the universal practice of the English courts of judicature in the interpretation of penal statutes, to explain the doubt in the sense least favourable to the delinquent. Such was, indeed, the violence with which the Legislature now proceeded, that, had not the political circumstances of the times undergone an unexpected revolution, another Marian persecution was justly to be apprehended.

Towards the end of the year 1669, the principal executive offices of government were filled by Clifford, Arlington, Buckingham, Ashley Cooper, afterwards Earl of Shaftesbury, and Lauderdale, who composed that administration so well known by the appellation of the CABAL; men who, to borrow the language of Lord Clarendon, had "heads to contrive, hearts to approve, and hands to execute, any mischief:" and it may with strict justice be affirmed, that the King, in concert with these abandoned ministers, was engaged in a conspiracy against the religion, laws, and liberties of his kingdom. The dissimulation and perfidy of Charles

Charles are such as to make it extremely questionable, whether he ever really entered into the views with which the triple alliance was formed: however that may be, it is certain that within two years after that event, his political conduct was totally changed; and, in an interview which took place in the spring of the year 1670 with his sister, Henrietta, Duchess of Orleans, a secret treaty was negotiated with the French King, for the purposes of subverting the Republic of Holland, of making the authority of Charles absolute, and of establishing once more the Romish religion in the realms of Britain; as a prelude to which, Charles was formally absolved, and received into the bosom of the Catholic Church. In pursuance of this plan, the King had the unparalleled assurance to convene the Parliament in October, and to procure supplies to a very large amount, under pretence of the danger to be apprehended from the increasing power of France, and the obligation and necessity of supporting the triple alliance. When money was thus obtained, the mask was thrown off, and military preparations were openly made; but, in order to secure an additional supply, as nothing farther could be expected from Parliament, an infamous resolution was taken, previous to a declaration of war, to shut up the Royal Exchequer; by which means, the vast sums advanced by the bankers, upon the credit of the funds provided by Parliament, were confiscated. The distress, consternation, and ruin, consequent on this enormous violation of public

public faith, did not prevent the Court from taking another step, if possible, still more alarming, and fraught with still more extensive consequences. This was the famous declaration of indulgence, by which the King took upon him, by virtue of his prerogative, to suspend all the penal laws at once. The Lord Keeper, Sir Orlando Bridgeman, nobly refused to affix the great seal to this declaration; for which he was immediately removed from his office, and Shaftesbury advanced to the dignity of Chancellor. The design of introducing Popery was now become apparent to every one, and the actual declaration of war against the Dutch, which quickly followed, raised the indignation and apprehensions of the nation to the highest pitch. The successful campaign of 1672, in which the United States were reduced to the brink of ruin by the arms of Louis XIV. encouraged the King, after an interval of near two years, to assemble the Parliament; and the Session was opened by a speech from the throne, expressed in a very high tone of authority; he spoke of the war not only as just, but necessary, and as what he was fully determined to prosecute; and he informed the House that he had issued a declaration of indulgence, from which he had experienced very happy effects; to which he should therefore adhere, and the validity of which he would not suffer to be questioned or opposed. Notwithstanding the courtly disposition of which this House of Commons had given so many proofs, and their former base and criminal compliances, it must be
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acknowledged that upon this great occasion, which involved in it the most essential interests of the whole community, they acted in a manner worthy of the representatives of a free and spirited people. They first passed a resolution of supply; but before they proceeded to substantiate the vote, they framed a remonstrance against the declaration of indulgence; to which the King replied in resolute terms. The Commons repeated their application in a firm and decisive tone; and when matters were thus brought to a crisis, Charles, who found himself on the edge of a precipice, and whose genius was not calculated for great and continued exertion, thought proper, on a sudden, to retreat. After asking, to save appearances, the opinion of the House of Peers, which of course coincided with that of the Commons, he sent for the declaration, and with his own hand broke the seal; acknowledging to the whole world, by this act, that his want of courage bore a very exact proportion to his want of wisdom, and want of honesty. Shaftesbury, the daring, the unprincipled, and deep-designing Shaftesbury, no sooner perceived that the King began to waver and to hesitate, than he resolved to provide for his own security; and, without any previous notice, to the amazement of the Court, when the question was agitated in the House of Peers, he gave a decided opinion, in a very eloquent speech, for the recal of the declaration; which he asserted, however laudable in its intention, was, since the intervention and solemn disapprobation of the Parliament, become wholly

wholly indefensible. Such were the transcendent abilities of this nobleman, that, notwithstanding the turpitude of his political conduct, he was received by the leaders of the opposition with open arms, and from that period became the AHITO-PHEL of all their counsels. The House of Commons pursued the victory they had gained with great moderation: they even appeared desirous to avoid urging the King to desperate extremities. No mention was made of the violation of the triple alliance, or of the shutting up the Exchequer. An act of indemnity was passed, with a view chiefly to screen the ministers of the Crown from any farther enquiry; and the resolution of supply, to the great disappointment of the Dutch, passed into a law: in return for which, the King gave the royal assent to the famous Test Act; which required every man, holding a public office, to receive the sacrament according to the usage of the established Church, and to abjure the doctrine of transubstantiation. This was a vigorous and well aimed stroke; and as the Duke of York, who resigned his commission of High Admiral, with tears declared, the most fatal blow that the Roman catholic interest could have received. Soon after the Parliament rose, the treasurer's staff was taken from Clifford, who had become extremely obnoxious by the intemperate zeal with which he had supported the declaration of indulgence, and who was now incapacitated by the test, and given to Sir Thomas Osborne, created Earl of Danby; a man not of splendid talents,

lents, but cautious and prudent, and who, in the present situation of affairs, seemed not ill qualified to fill that high and important station.

In the month of October, 1673, the Parliament was again convened; but a more refractory spirit began now to appear. The Commons were highly offended with the treaty of marriage then in agitation between the Duke of York and a Princess of the House of Modena, and remonstrated warmly against it. They voted the alliance with France to be a grievance, and came to a resolution that they would grant no farther supply, unless the Dutch obstinately refused to treat of peace; upon which the King, who had relinquished those magnificent projects which he had so lately entertained, thought proper to conclude a separate peace with Holland, through the mediation of the Spanish Court, in the beginning of the year 1674. Great rejoicings were made on account of this peace, and it was hoped that the King, convinced of his past errors, would endeavour to retrieve the esteem and affection of his subjects by his future conduct. To confirm these favourable impressions, Sir W. Temple, who negotiated the triple alliance, and who stood higher than any man in the confidence of the States, was again appointed ambassador at the Hague: the mediation of the King was solemnly offered in order to effect a general peace, and Nimeguen fixed on as the place of congress. As the continuance of the war could no longer answer any political purpose, the King may reasonably be supposed

supposed sincere, if not zealous, in his endeavours to restore the tranquillity of Europe.—Louis also, whose schemes of ambition, by the defection of England, were totally frustrated, and who now found himself engaged alone against a formidable confederacy, though his armies still maintained a superiority in the field, was not averse to a treaty; but the Prince of Orange, strengthened by the alliance of the Imperial and Spanish Courts, and hoping for the accession of England, was secretly disinclined to listen to overtures of reconciliation, and aspired to the glory of humbling the pride of that haughty monarch, whom he regarded with detestation, not merely as the unprovoked invader of his native country, but as the common enemy and disturber of Europe. The French arms, however, under the conduct of those consummate generals, Condé, Turenne, and Luxemburg, still continued to make a rapid progress; and the Parliament, finding the mediation of Charles not attended with success, in the Session held in February 1677 after a long interval, during which it appears that large sums were remitted from France, voted an address to the King to enter into a league offensive and defensive with the States General. The King affected to resent this interference as an encroachment upon his prerogative, and, in anger, immediately adjourned the Parliament. The fact was, that he had actually sold his neutrality to France, and that he had regularly received a pension from that court to the amount of two millions of livres,

as the price of his honour and conscience. Throughout his whole reign, however, it was contrary to the maxims of policy by which Charles was governed, to risque a serious or violent rupture with the Parliament; and he was convinced that some popular measure was absolutely requisite, in his present circumstances, to palliate his conduct, and in some degree to redeem his reputation; and no measure could more effectually answer those purposes, than the marriage of the Princess Mary, eldest daughter of the Duke of York to the Prince of Orange, who by this alliance might be led to entertain no very distant prospect of succeeding to the English Crown. When this intention was made public, the highest degree of satisfaction was expressed by all parties; and the Prince arriving in England at the end of the campaign, the marriage ceremony was performed, to the great surprize and chagrin of the French Monarch; who received the intelligence, to use the expression of Montague, the English Ambassador at Paris, "as he would have done that of the loss of an army." The good consequences expected from this union did not, however, immediately appear. The King, indeed, pretended to enter into an amicable consultation with the Prince respecting the terms of the treaty of peace; which were at last settled in such a manner as to give satisfaction to the allies; and Charles protested, that if the plan then concerted was rejected by Louis, he would immediately join the Confe-

deracy. After the Prince's departure, however, he resumed his clandestine negotiations with France, made great concessions and abatements in the terms originally projected; for which he received pecuniary compensations from Louis: And though Charles, finding that he incurred the indignation and contempt of all parties, by the baseness and duplicity of his conduct, seemed at length resolved in earnest to adopt vigorous and decisive measures, the Parliament no longer appeared disposed to confide in his professions; and the allies, despairing of effectual support from England, signed a peace with France at Nimeguen, in August 1678.

It appears from late discoveries, that the patriotic party in the House of Commons, led by Sydney, Russel, &c. were secretly averse to engage the nation in a war with France, notwithstanding the apparent incongruity of their public conduct; and in this they concurred with a great majority of the wisest and most dispassionate members of the United States, though not with the sentiments of the Stadtholder, by whose authority and influence alone the war, without any political necessity, had been so long continued. The leaders of the opposition in Parliament well knew that no real danger was now to be apprehended from France. The King had it in his power to dictate the terms of the treaty of peace, and they with good reason entertained the strongest jealousies and suspicions, that the immense sums which

which must be voted, and the vast armaments which must be raised, in order to carry on a war against France, might eventually be directed against the religion and liberties of this kingdom. They were fully acquainted with the deep and dangerous designs which the King had formerly harboured against his subjects, and which want of power, and not want of inclination, had at length compelled him to abandon. The Court of France, for very different but very obvious reasons, was equally solicitous to prevent the King from joining the Confederacy; in consequence of which accidental union of interests, intrigues were carried on between the French Ambassador and the members of Opposition, and great sums of French gold were distributed with the approbation of even such men as Russel, Sydney, and Hollis, in order to accomplish a great political purpose, which unhappily was not to be effected by open and honourable means. Men of virtue and integrity, who hold the noiseless tenor of their way through the cool sequestered vale of private life, are apt to feel a much greater degree of indignation at these irregular practices, than the nature of the facts will justify. "*Fiat justitia ruat coelum,*" is with such men a fundamental maxim of political morality. They consider not that virtue is itself founded upon utility, and that the end is not to be ultimately sacrificed to the means; and when the public safety is the end in view, an object of such transcendent importance will certainly justify the use of such

means as are indispensably necessary to its attainment. Had the nation fallen again under the yoke of Popery and arbitrary power, in consequence of those refinements of delicacy, or scruples of conscience, by which, now the danger is past, we are ready to affirm that the patriots of the last century ought to have been actuated, Russel and Sydney, Lyttelton and Hollis, might have a just claim to regard and esteem, as honest and well meaning men; but posterity would have had little reason to applaud their sagacity as statesmen, or to venerate their memories as enlightened patriots.

England, after the conclusion of the peace of Nimeguen, remained in a state of extreme dissatisfaction and uneasiness; the honour as well as the interest of the nation was thought to be sacrificed. It was evident that France had obtained much more advantageous terms than she was entitled to expect. The King was universally acknowledged to be the arbiter of the peace, and he had justly incurred the imputation of having been bribed to betray the interests of the Confederates. Of Charles's predilection for Popery, also, doubts could no longer be entertained; and though the King's natural good sense, as well as his want of political firmness, had prevented him, and would probably continue to prevent him, from urging matters to any desperate extremity himself, the attention of people began now to be fixed on his immediate successor, whose bigoted attachment to the Romish religion became every day more apparent; whose temper
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was known to be extremely violent, whose capacity was proportionably narrow, and whose obstinacy was systematic and invincible. At this critical juncture an incident happened, important in itself, but much more so in its consequences, attended by very extraordinary circumstances, some of them of a very dark and mysterious nature, and which time has not enabled the most sagacious historians completely to elucidate. In the month of August 1678, the King walking, as his custom was, in the Mall, was addressed by a stranger, who informed him that a plot was concerted against his life: Upon being referred to Lord Danby for examination, he introduced to that minister various other persons, amongst whom was the famous Titus Oates, who all agreed in the reality of a plot, not only to murder the King, but to extirpate the protestant religion; after which they pretended the Crown was to be offered to the Duke of York, who was to receive it as a gift from the Pope. To this evidence was appended a prodigious variety of incoherent and incredible circumstances. When the witnesses were farther examined before the Privy Council, several persons of very high rank were accused; and Coleman, secretary to the Duke of York, was expressly affirmed to be in the whole secret of the conspiracy. When the papers of Coleman, however, were seized, nothing more appeared than a fiery and intemperate zeal for the restoration of the catholic religion, and the extirpation of heresy, and some sanguine expressions of hope that a fa-

vourable opportunity would shortly present itself for the accomplishment of these glorious purposes. This certainly was far from amounting to the discovery of a plot; and men were at a loss what to think of the testimony of these informers, who were men of extreme profligacy of character; when the murder of Sir Edmundbury Godfrey, a popular magistrate, by whom the depositions had been taken, threw the whole nation into a paroxysm of consternation and rage: he was found at a considerable distance from his own habitation, with evident marks of violence about his person, and his own sword thrust through his body. It was immediately concluded that he was assassinated by the Papists; and the reality of the plot was no longer doubted. During the height of this political ferment, the Parliament assembled, and almost immediately passed a vote, "That a damnable and hellish Popish plot was actually carrying on for assassinating the King, subverting the Government, and rooting out the Protestant Religion:" and the Lords Powis, Arundel, Stafford, Petre, and Bellasis were, upon the evidence of Oates, &c. committed to the Tower, and soon after impeached for high treason. While the House of Commons was deeply engaged in the prosecution of this business, which Lord Danby himself, contrary to the King's inclination, had promoted a parliamentary investigation of, a discovery was made, which put a sudden termination to the credit and authority of that nobleman. Whilst the
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negotiations for peace were depending, in the year 1677, the Lord Treasurer was officially privy to, and in some measure concerned in, the scandalous concessions made by the King to the prejudice of the allies, and the consequent equivalents in money received from the French Court. It is true, that nobleman always expressed his dislike of these proceedings, which were chiefly carried on by the intervention of Montague, the English Ambassador; a man of address, whose principles were never found at variance with his interest. This man aspired to the office of Secretary of State, which Sir William Coventry was willing to resign in his favour, for the sum of ten thousand pounds. Montague applied in very humble and adulatory terms to the Lord Treasurer, to prevail upon the King to ratify this curious bargain; but finding that Sir William Temple, by the recommendation of Lord Danby, was nominated to that office, he left Paris with great precipitation, and to the confusion and astonishment of the minister, exhibited a charge of corruption against him in the House of Commons, though he had himself been far more deeply concerned in those very transactions upon which the accusation was grounded. The House of Commons, inflamed with this intelligence, immediately voted an impeachment for high treason against the Treasurer. The Peers, however, refused to commit Danby upon a charge of treason so weakly founded. The Commons persisted in their demand, and great contests being likely to arise upon

this point, the King, who plainly perceived that this House of Commons, formerly so submissive and loyal, was no longer to be either cajoled, or over-awed, thought proper first to prorogue, and soon after to dissolve the Parliament, which had now sat almost eighteen years.

The new Parliament, which met in March following, 1679, soon displayed a spirit of jealousy and opposition to the Court, at least equal to their predecessors. The impeachment of Danby was revived; but the King had previously granted him a pardon under the great seal, which he affixed to it with his own hands: But the Commons affirmed, that no pardon could be pleaded in bar of impeachment; and Danby, who had absconded, but who chose to make his appearance, rather than to incur the penalties of a bill of attainder, was immediately committed to the Tower. The House proceeded with equal violence in the prosecution of the pretended Popish plot, the existence of which still depended upon the testimony of the infamous Oates, and his still more infamous accomplices. The vote of the former Parliament was renewed; and Colonel Sackville was expelled the House for presuming, somewhat indiscreetly, to call in question its reality. Even the courts of justice upon this occasion became the mere instruments of parliamentary and popular vengeance; nor did the nation awaken from its delirium, till the scaffold had streamed with the blood of various persons of high distinction, and great numbers of inferior rank,
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both clergy and laity, had fallen a sacrifice to this egregious imposture. Though it must be acknowledged that nothing was discovered, after the most indefatigable investigation of this affair, which could possibly be construed into a plot or conspiracy, by any mind not distempered by the rage of faction, yet the Parliament, as well as the nation, had sufficient grounds to apprehend that, in the event of the King's decease, the most vigorous attempts would be used by his successor, to re-establish the Romish religion in these realms, with its natural, and in this case, its inseparable concomitant, arbitrary power. It was, therefore, with the highest degree of public approbation, that the House of Commons came to an unanimous vote, "That the Duke of York's being a Papist, and the hopes of his succeeding to the Crown, had given the highest countenance to the present designs of the Papists, against the King and the protestant religion." This was regarded, and it was unquestionably intended, as the prelude to a bill for excluding him from the throne. Charles, who held his brother's understanding in just contempt, and who had little affection to his person, was, however, fully determined, and he adhered to his determination with a degree of firmness of which he was thought wholly incapable, never to give his assent to a measure which appeared to him in the highest degree violent and unjust. Previous to the introduction of this famous bill, therefore, he proposed to the Parliament, in a
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very gracious and conciliatory speech, a plan of limitations, which would have effectually secured the religion and liberties of the nation; and at the same time declared, that if any thing farther could be devised by the wisdom of Parliament, as an additional satisfaction, without defeating the right of succession, he was ready to consent to it. I believe it is now very generally acknowledged, that limitation, and not exclusion, ought to have been the object of Parliament; but upon this occasion, that fundamental maxim of true policy was too much neglected, that we are ever to aim not at that which is best in itself, but at the best of those alternatives which are practicable; though it must be confessed, that the King had given so many proofs of the flexibility of his temper, in the course of his reign, and of his extreme reluctance to risque a total rupture with Parliament, that there was some reason to believe he might ultimately be induced to concur in the rigorous and popular plan of exclusion. Possessed with these ideas, the House of Commons rejected with disdain the compromise offered by the King, and without any delay passed the bill of exclusion, by a great majority of votes; though, by a clause of it, the Duke was declared guilty of high treason if, after the decease of the King, he appeared within the limits of the British dominions. In the vain hope of mollifying the untoward disposition of the Commons, the King at this period passed the memorable Habeas Corpus Act; though
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the Duke of York affirmed to him, that with such a law in being no government could subsist. Finding, however, that no impression was to be made by any act of grace or condescension, he took a sudden resolution to dissolve the Parliament, and writs were at the same time issued for a new Parliament, which nevertheless did not meet till the succeeding summer. In the interim, Shaftesbury, now the oracle of the opposition, attended by Russel, Cavendish, Grey, and many other persons of the first distinction, publicly appeared in Westminster Hall, and presented the Duke of York to the grand jury of Middlesex as a Popish recusant. This unprecedented act of audacity was intended by the popular party to convince the Court, as well as the world, that they were firmly resolved never to listen to any terms of accommodation with the Duke, and that his exclusion from the throne was a point which, at all hazards, they were determined to insist upon.

At length, in October 1680, the Parliament was convened, and the session was opened with a very judicious, animated, and even affectionate speech from the throne. At this period, if at any time, Charles was sincerely desirous of living upon terms of mutual confidence and harmony with his subjects. His own excellent understanding could not but suggest to him, that the numerous difficulties and embarrassments in which he had been involved, had arisen almost entirely from his own misconduct; his love of ease, and the advanced age
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to which he had now arrived, were strong inducements to him to avoid those measures which had a tendency to inflame the Parliament, or to disgust the nation: and since the alliance with the Prince of Orange, he was less inclined to a close connection with Louis, whose conduct for a certain period, immediately preceding the peace of Nimeguen, he had even deemed, after all the obloquy he had incurred upon his account, highly ungrateful and injurious, and of which he still retained a deep resentment. In this speech, truly worthy of a British Monarch, he again informed the Parliament that he was willing to concur in any expedient for the security of the Protestant Religion, provided the succession were preserved in the due and legal course. After stating his pecuniary wants, for which he trusted Parliament would provide, he added, "But that which I value above all the treasure in the world, is a perfect union among ourselves. All Europe have their eyes upon this assembly; if any unseasonable disputes do happen, the world will see that it is no fault of mine: I have done all that it was possible for me to do, to keep you in peace while I live, and to leave you so when I die. But from so great prudence and good affection as yours, I can fear nothing of the kind; but do rely upon you all, that you will do your best endeavours to bring this Parliament to a good and happy conclusion." The mildness and moderation of the King were not however attended

attended by any sensible or salutary effects. In a few days the Bill of Exclusion was again introduced, passed by a great majority, and carried up to the Lords; who, influenced chiefly by the eloquence of the Marquis of Halifax, after vehement debates, at length determined to reject it. The Commons immediately voted an address for the removal of that nobleman from his Majesty's counsels and presence for ever; and this address was soon after followed by another in the highest degree inflammatory; in which all the abuses of government, which had been the subject of complaint almost from the beginning of the King's reign, were insisted upon; and the "damnable and hellish Popish plot" is openly ascribed to that party, under whose influence it is plainly insinuated that all the measures of government originated. They likewise voted, that whoever advised his Majesty to refuse the exclusion bill, were enemies to the King and Kingdom, and that, till this bill were passed, they could not, consistently with the trust reposed in them, grant the King any manner of supply. No farther hopes remaining of bringing the Commons to any better temper, the King dissolved the Parliament in January 1681; but, desirous to make one more effort to effect a reconciliation with his people, he summoned another Parliament to meet at Oxford, in March. In his speech at the opening of it, he told them, in a tone of seriousness and dignity, that

that though he had reason to complain of the unwarrantable proceedings of the former House of Commons, no past irregularities could inspire him with a prejudice against those assemblies. He now afforded them yet another opportunity of providing for the public safety; and to all the world he had given one evidence more, that on his part, he had not neglected the duty incumbent on him. Such, however, was the infatuation of the House of Commons, that though the Ministers of the Crown proposed, by command of the King, that the Duke should be banished during life five hundred miles from England, and that, on the King's demise, the next heir should be constituted Regent, with kingly power, they deemed no expedient, but the absolute exclusion of the Duke, worthy of attention. The patience and moderation of the King, which had stood a very severe trial, now seemed at last to forsake him; and before the Commons had time to pass a single bill, he suddenly and unexpectedly dissolved the Parliament, with a full resolution not to summon another, till the spirit and temper of the times had undergone an essential alteration. The popular party were struck with consternation at this vigorous procedure; and the nation, disgusted with the obstinacy of their representatives, and pleased with the great concessions made by the King, joined in applauding the firmness and spirit with which he acted on this occasion. The desperate measures afterwards

afterwards resorted to by the patriots, the fatal catastrophe which ensued, and the tragical end of Sydney, Russel, Essex, and others of the party, too plainly evinced the imprudence and folly of their preceding conduct; which indeed affords a memorable lesson to posterity, how solicitous men ought to be, who have great and laudable ends in view, to adopt rational and practicable methods of effecting them. The despotism exercised by Charles, from this period, was scarcely inferior to that of Henry VIII. though it is certain that, pressed by pecuniary difficulties, and living in the continual dread of another revolution, his gaiety of spirit forsook him, and he became silent, absent, and melancholy. It is generally believed, and with good reason, that he was meditating a change of measures, and that he had it in contemplation very shortly to summon another Parliament, from which very happy consequences would probably have resulted, when he was suddenly seized with a fit of apoplexy, and died February 6th, 1685, in the 55th year of his age, and 25th of his reign. Some remarkable circumstances attending his death, have occasioned a suspicion of poison; and Burnet, who says of himself that no man was ever more inquisitive, and he might have added credulous, seems to have given some credit to the report; but there does not appear any sufficient ground for an accusation of this atrocious nature. I shall only add, that this monarch, whose superiority of understanding,

standing, and quickness of penetration, were no less conspicuous than his total want of virtue and of principle, might, with more propriety than almost any man, as the whole tenor of his conduct demonstrates, adopt the declaration of the unhappy MEDEA:

"Video meliora proboq. deteriora sequor."

ESSAY XVII.

On the CHARACTER and WRITINGS of
ST. EVREMOND.

“**R**ENOUNCE St. Evremond, and read St. Paul,” says a celebrated Christian Divine and Poet; but I am of opinion that St. Paul may be read to very good purpose, without renouncing St. Evremond. There are many authors who, without directly intending, or perhaps without being even conscious of it, delineate in their writings the features of their own character in colours so lively, that it is impossible not to regard them with the same sentiments of partiality or dislike, as usually result from a personal and intimate acquaintance. The character of St. Evremond, viewed through this medium, has always appeared to me in a light peculiarly interesting and amiable; and the favourable impression made by a perusal of his Works, is confirmed by all the traditional and biographical accounts remaining of this accomplished Frenchman. He appears to have been a man of excellent capacity, intimately acquainted with the

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world, and perfectly conversant with the secret springs of human conduct, and the genuine movements of the human heart. He was the man of fashion, the man of wit, and the man of pleasure; but as his love of pleasure was regulated by a refined taste and cultivated understanding, it never betrayed him into any disgraceful excesses; and he preserved his gaiety of heart and his vigour of intellect unimpaired to the age of ninety; passing his days in a delightful kind of philosophic indolence, not less beloved for the virtues of his heart than admired for the charms of his wit and conversation. His libertine principles respecting religion are well known. Educated in the bosom of the Romish Church, his superior discernment enabled him, with little effort, to emancipate himself from vulgar prejudices, and to reject without hesitation that enormous mass of absurdity and superstition which assumes the appellation of the catholic faith. Unhappily he appears, like the majority of infidels in Romish countries, to have taken it for granted that the doctrines of Popery were the genuine doctrines of Christianity, or, at least, they presume that Christianity must be in part chargeable with those absurdities, which so justly excite their ridicule and contempt, and therefore they think it superfluous to examine into the evidences of it.

With respect to the principles of natural religion, St. Evremond is far from denying their reality and importance; but he doubts, as every philosopher
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who is ingenuous and impartial must be constrained to do, of the strength and sufficiency of the evidence by which they are supported. “Ja-
 “ mais homme,” says he, “ n’a été bien persuadé
 “ par sa raison ou que l’ame fut certainement im-
 “ mortelle, ou qu’elle s’anéantit effectivement avec
 “ le corps.—On ne doute point que Socrate n’ait
 “ crû l’Immortalité de l’Ame; son histoire le dit, &
 “ les sentiments que Platon attribué semble nous
 “ en assurer. Mais Socrate ne nous en assure pas
 “ lui-meme; car quand il est devant ses juges, il
 “ en parle comme un homme qui la souhaite, &
 “ traite l’Anéantissement comme un philosophe
 “ qui ne le craint point.—Qu’a fait Descartes
 “ par sa demonstration prétendue d’une substance
 “ purement spirituelle, d’une substance qui doit
 “ penser éternellement? Qu’a-t’il fait par des Spé-
 “ culations si épurées? Il a fait croire que la Reli-
 “ gion ne le persuadoit pas, sans pouvoir persuader
 “ ni lui ni les autres par les Raisons.”

St. Evremond has been frequently stiled a super-
 ficial writer, and his biographers, Sylvestre and
 Des Maizeaux have given some countenance to the
 accusation by their own acknowledgment.—“ Il
 “ n’avoit pas,” say they, “ un grand savoir—En
 “ lisant il s’attachoit plus a’étudier le genie, & le
 “ caractère d’un Auteur qu’a charger sa memoire
 “ d’une erudition fastueuse & souvent inutile.” I
 do not think there are any words by which man-
 kind are more frequently deceived, than by the

terms superficial and profound. Nothing can properly be stiled superficial, which discovers just and comprehensive views of a subject, though it may not suit the writer's purpose or inclination to compose an elaborate dissertation, or to enter much into detail. On the other hand, many very voluminous, and what the world calls very profound treatises, have been written on various subjects, which to intelligent readers exhibit nothing more than the profound ignorance or absurdity of the authors. Thus we abound in profound systems of ancient Mythology, profound criticisms on ancient Poetry, profound researches into ancient History, and profound commentaries upon ancient Metaphysics. But writers of the class to which St. Evremond belongs, are not superficial, though necessarily concise, from that superiority of judgment and understanding, which will not suffer them to introduce what is foreign and inapplicable to the subject; and that justness of taste and happy skill in the art of composition, which enables them to express every sentiment in the simplest and most perspicuous language. His "*Reflexions sur les divers genies du peuple Romains dans les divers tems de la Republique*," are written in the true spirit of philosophy; they are bold, sagacious, and just. I cannot but extremely regret, that through an unfortunate accident we are deprived of the seven chapters which comprized the important period, commencing at the Jugurthine war, and terminating

nating with the death of Julius Cæsar. His Moral Essays are highly pleasing, and abound with observations which discover uncommon genius and penetration; and his Criticisms are truly classical and judicious. In his Remarks upon Racine's Tragedy of Alexander the Great, he scruples not to place that elegant poet, whom he nevertheless applauds with warmth and feeling, far below the level of the great Corneille, a point at that time much contested, though the superiority of Corneille is at present universally acknowledged. M. de Corneille, conscious of the justice of his own claim, and gratified by the praises and suffrage of so distinguished a judge, wrote a complimentary letter upon the occasion to M. de St. Evremond; in which, with an excusable vanity, or rather a dignified pride, he expresses his firm assurance, that though his reputation suffered a temporary injury from the attacks of ignorance and detraction, he should receive from posterity complete and ample justice.

“ Vous m'honorez,” says this celebrated genius,
 “ de votre estime en un tems où il semble qu'il
 “ y ait un parti fait pour ne m'en laisser aucune.
 “ Vous me consolez glorieusement de la délicatesse
 “ de nôtre siècle, quand vous daignez m'attribuer
 “ le bon goût de l'antiquité. Je vous avoue après
 “ cela, que je pense avoir quelque droit de traiter de
 “ ridicules ces vains trophées qu'on établit sur le
 “ débris imaginaire des miens; & de regarder avec
 “ pitié ces opiniâtres entêtements qu'on avoit
 “ pour les anciens Héros refondus à notre mode.”

The reply of St. Evremond is not a little remarkable “ Je vous puis repondre que jamais réputation n’a été si bien établie que la vôtre en Angleterre & en Hollande. Les Anglois assez disposés naturellement à estimer ce qui leur appartient renoncent à cette opinion souvent bien fondée, & croient faire honneur à leur Ben Johnson, de le nommer Le Corneille D’Angleterre.” Was Shakespeare, then, the boast and glory of the Drama; the ornament, not of England only, but the pride of all nature.—Was that mighty and transcendent genius regarded as of so little importance, that his name was not deemed worthy even of mention upon this occasion? Was the cold, the formal, the pedantic Johnson, to be singled out as the champion of our literary fame, to enter the lists of genius against the illustrious Corneille?—The well known preference given by the nation in general, during a great part of the last century to Ben Johnson, as well as his celebrated cotemporaries, Beaumont and Fletcher, with respect to a writer so prodigiously superior, not only to them, but to every dramatic genius which the world ever saw, is a very curious literary phenomenon. We usually satisfy ourselves with attributing, in a general way, this remarkable error in judgment to the depravity of the reigning taste. But the taste and judgment of the public had certainly upon the whole made a considerable advance to maturity since the age of Elizabeth, when the Dramas of Shakespeare

speare excited universal delight and admiration. Several reasons might perhaps be assigned, if this were the proper place, which would, in some measure, account for this temporary preference so injurious to the reputation of Shakespeare, and so disgraceful to the good sense and discernment of the nation. As to St. Evremond, it may well be questioned whether he had even read the works of Shakespeare at the time this letter was written. He appears, indeed, notwithstanding the compliments he occasionally pays to the English nation, to have entertained no very high idea of English literature; and it must be acknowledged that France, at this brilliant period of the reign of Louis XIV. had made far greater advances in almost every department of taste and literature than the surrounding nations, and that England, in particular, followed her with slow and unequal steps.

Notwithstanding the favourable reception St. Evremond met with in this kingdom, and the flattering attention paid to him by persons of the most distinguished rank, he sighed in secret at the recollection that he was a banished man; and the great object of his life, for many years, was to obtain permission to return to his beloved country. England, during almost the whole period of St. Evremond's residence here, was immersed in politics. While the great questions of Liberty and Religion agitated the nation, both of which St. Evremond regarded with cold indifference, little leisure, as well as inclination, remained for the cultivation of the fine arts, or the belles lettres;

and St. Evremond, amidst the noise and fury of contending factions, languished for the serenity, the elegance, and urbanity of Paris. At length, however, he seems to have reconciled himself, in a great measure, to the manners and disposition of the people amongst whom he had so long resided; and when the royal permission was at last granted to St. Evremond, after he had long ceased his solicitations, to end his days in his native land, he refused with becoming dignity to accept the offered pardon. He replied to the Comte de Grammont, through the medium of whom the pardon was notified, says M. de Maizeaux, "qu'il
" étoit trop vieux pour se transplanter; que d'ail-
" leurs il aimoit mieux rester par choix à
" Londres, où il étoit connu de ce qu'il y avoit
" d'honnêtes gens; où l'on étoit accoutumé à sa
" loupe & à ses cheveux blancs, à ses manieres &
" à son tour d'esprit, que de retourner en France
" où il avoit perdu toutes ses habitudes; où il
" seroit comme étranger, & où à peine connoî-
" troit-il un autre courtisan que le Comte de
" Grammont, lui-même."

At this time the Revolution had taken place, and St. Evremond was high in favour with the new King, William III. whom he appears to have regarded, not very consistently indeed with the ideas of government which occasionally emerge in his writings, with the utmost esteem and admiration. The applause he lavishes upon that great Monarch might well pass for flattery, had he been equally prodigal of praise in the former reigns; but as his
reserve

reserve in that respect, notwithstanding his personal obligations, is remarkable, there is little reason to doubt, that with some allowance for poetical and courtly embellishment, he spake the genuine sentiments of his heart. The heroic and magnanimous qualities of that Prince, and that succession of great, useful, and memorable actions which distinguished his life, could not fail, in the estimation of a man so capable of discriminating as St. Evremond, totally to eclipse the dazzling and delusive splendors of the character of Louis XIV. whose "glaring orb" had now passed its meridian height.

From the various eulogiums upon our immortal Hero, to be met with in the works of St. Evremond, I shall select the following, as a compliment, equally elegant and just—"Don Antonio
 "de Cordoue disoit qu'il est difficile de trouver
 "un grand Héros : un grand Héros, & un bon
 "Roi ensemble presque impossible : un grand Hé-
 "ros, un bon Roi, & un honnête homme ; c'est
 "ce qu'on n'avoit jamais vû, & ce qu'on ne ver-
 "roit jamais.

"Vous n'aviez pas le don de prophétie
 "Quand vous fîtes ce jugement ;
 "Antonio, si vous étiez en vie
 "Vous changeriez de sentiment ;
 "Antonio, ces talens dispersés
 "Sont dans le Roi malgré vous ramassés
 "On reconnoît, sans besoin qu'on le nomme
 "Le grand Héros, le bon Roi, l'honnête homme."

Of

Of the poetry of St. Evremond, in which term I mean to include his dramatic pieces, it may in general be affirmed, that it does not exceed the *mediocre*. It was never esteemed excellent by the French themselves, and it is now sinking fast into oblivion. In a word, his poetical effusions are the productions, to use the language of his biographers, “ d’un homme du monde qui dans
 “ une grand oisiveté cherche a passer agreable-
 “ ment le tems—d’un bel esprit qui pense a se di-
 “ vertir.” And though he appears to have written in verse, as well as prose, with great ease and facility, the utmost to which he ever attains, or perhaps aspires, is elegance, and this only in trifles; for his more elaborate pieces are as devoid of the graces of composition as of the charms of imagination and genius.

I have intimated that the opinions of St. Evremond, relative to Government, were not very liberal, or perhaps very consistent. The principles of Mr. Locke, now so universally received, and deemed almost self-evident, were at that time regarded as the novel and dangerous speculations of a bold and visionary writer; though the subject seems not to have excited much of St. Evremond’s attention, who never was so far naturalized as to adopt the feelings and sentiments of an Englishman. His ideas of religious toleration also appear to have been miserably contracted and erroneous. “ Une des premieres sagesse,” he tells his friend, M. Justel, “ & des plus commandées,
 “ c’est

“ c’est de respecter en tout pays la Religion du
 “ Prince: condamner la créance du Souverain,
 “ c’est condamner le Souverain en même tems.
 “ Un Catholique Anglois, qui dans ses discours,
 “ ou dans ses ecrits donne le nom d’heresie a la
 “ Religion Anglicane, traite le Roi d’Angleterre
 “ d’heretique & lui fait une insulte dans ses pro-
 “ pres etats : un Huguenot en France qui traite la
 “ Religion Catholique d’Idolatrie, accuse le Roi
 “ par une consequence nécessaire d’etre Idolatre, ce
 “ que les Empereurs payens même n’ont pû
 “ souffrir. Voulez-vous me croire Monsieur jou-
 “ issez paisiblement de l’exercise qu’on vous per-
 “ met, tel qu’il puisse être ; & soyez persuadé que
 “ les Princes ont autant de droit sur l’extérieur de
 “ la Religion, qu’en ont les sujets sur le fond se-
 “ cret de leur conscience.” Such are the senti-
 ments of the celebrated M. de St. Evremond upon
 the subject of Toleration. It is strange that a man,
 who could reason upon other topics with such
 acuteness and precision, should need to be told,
 that as Nature distributes her gifts with an im-
 partial hand, and the intellectual powers of Princes
 are not superior to those of their subjects, they are
 not in any respect better qualified for the investi-
 gation and discovery of truth. That whatever the
 private sentiments of the Prince may be, to oppose
 those sentiments by force, not of arms, but of ar-
 gument, can never be justly construed into cri-
 minal disobedience to his authority. The most en-
 lightened and most virtuous citizens have exercised
 this

this privilege without any impeachment of their faith and loyalty; and the wisest and most unanimous Princes have been most ready to acknowledge the advantages which must result from this freedom of discussion.

The right which M. de St. Evremond thinks it sufficient to contend for, "Le droit que les sujets ont sur le fond secret de leur conscience," is such a right as the most abject slave cannot be divested of under the yoke of even oriental despotism: and the right which M. de St. Evremond is so ready to resign, "Sur l'exterieur de la Religion," is all that the Inquisition itself has ever dared to usurp. It is so obvious a truth, that it is wonderful men entrusted with the government of men should need to be reminded of it, that mankind are, and ever will be, actuated by motives which respect their happiness in a future as well as in the present state of existence. The doctrine of a future state, if men are not wholly sunk in ignorance and barbarism, must always be received as true, or as probable at least, by a great proportion of mankind. Now the great, and indeed the only proper object of temporal authority, is *temporal* prosperity; and men ought, upon every ground of reason and policy, to be permitted to secure their *future* happiness by such means as shall appear to them most effectual; and as amongst different classes of men a variety of opinions will inevitably prevail, as to the efficacy of different modes of faith and forms of worship, and these opinions will

will be supported with all the fervor of religious zeal, perhaps of fanatic enthusiasm, what but an excess of pride and folly approaching to infatuation can lead any Government to attempt, as Milton expresses it, "to bind Conscience in secular chains," or to enjoin or expect uniformity of conduct or profession, when diversity of sentiment, if Reason is not wholly discarded, is absolutely unavoidable. Before the will of the Sovereign, or of the State, in a case of this nature, can be implicitly submitted to, a universal torpor of the mental faculties must take place, and the human mind must be reduced to the most abject state of humiliation and debasement: or if, on the other hand, men should ever become sensible of the injustice and presumption of this claim, and the Sovereign, prompted by that pride, obstinacy, and folly, which are so frequently the concomitants of power, should resolve, at every hazard, to enforce it, all history demonstrates what civil discord, what persecution, what furious and bloody commotions, may be expected to ensue.

Toleration is a simple, easy, and effectual remedy for the prevention or removal of these "dire distresses."—Religion, it can never be repeated too often, is a personal thing.—No man, indeed, ought to be allowed to injure another under pretence of conscience; but, with this sole exception, every individual has an inherent right, and it is the most heinous of all oppressions to deprive him of the right, of securing and
advancing

advancing his future happiness by such methods as shall to him appear most conducive to the accomplishment of that purpose : but I am in danger of digressing too far from my subject. I shall now conclude these desultory observations by explaining in a few words the cause of St. Evremond's long banishment, as it is the most remarkable event of his life, and in itself a curious piece of secret history. About the year 1658, M. de St. Evremond had the misfortune to incur the displeasure of Cardinal Mazarine, by some free things spoken of his Eminence in the warmth and confidence of private conversation, at the table of the Duke de Candale, which were maliciously reported to the Cardinal, probably with some aggravation. Upon which St. Evremond was sent as a state prisoner to the Bastile, where he was detained several months : on being released, he thought it expedient to wait upon the Minister to return him thanks for his enlargement. Cardinal Mazarine told him that he was convinced of his innocence, and concerned for the inconvenience he had suffered ; but that a man in his situation, who was obliged to listen to so many reports, often found it difficult to distinguish truth from falsehood, and not to do injustice sometimes to an honest man.

With this apology St. Evremond was obliged to appear satisfied, but he retained in his bosom a deep resentment of the Cardinal's treatment ; and in the following year he found an opportunity of gratifying his spleen very much at the expence,

expence, as in the event it proved, of his own peace and happiness. The famous treaty of the Pyrenees was negotiated by Cardinal Mazarine and Don Louis de Haro in person. Amongst other courtiers and men of distinction St. Evremond was present during the conferences, and when the peace was signed, he wrote his sentiments upon it in a confidential letter to the Marquis de Crequi, in which he points his most acrimonious shafts of ridicule and satire against the Cardinal. The fact was, that Mazarine, swayed by interested motives, ardently wished to put an end to the war, and that the Spanish Minister, taking advantage of his impatience, had obtained far better terms than could reasonably be hoped from the debilitated and ruinous condition of the Spanish Monarchy. St. Evremond tells us that as soon as the peace was signed, Don Louis exclaimed, "Allons, Messieurs, allons, rendre graces à Dieu ; nous etions perdus, L'Espagne est sauvée." "Que le bon homme Don Louis," continues St. Evremond, "n'ait eu pour but que le service de son maître, & l'utilité du public, la maxime de M. le Cardinal est, que le Ministre doit etre moins à l'etat, que l'etat au Ministre ; & dans cette pensée pour peu que Dieu lui donne de jours il fera son propre bien de celui de tout le Roiaume."

This letter, which for the security and satisfaction of the writer was returned by the Marquis de Crequi to M. de St. Evremond, remained a profound secret during the life of the Cardinal. The
demise

demise of Mazarine, which happened in the year 1660, was immediately followed by the disgrace of M. Fouquet : in consequence of which event not only the papers of that Minister were seized, but the cabinets of his most confidential friends were examined by an order from the Crown. Unfortunately at this critical time St. Evremond happened to be on a tour to some distant province, and in order to "make assurance double sure, and take a "bond of fate," he had, previous to his departure from Paris, deposited this letter, amongst other papers of value, with a friend, who was, as the demon of ill luck would have it, one of the confidential intimates of M. Fouquet, and thus the fatal discovery was made. St. Evremond, terrified with the idea of returning to his old apartments in the Bastile, on receiving this unwelcome intelligence, made his escape into Holland, from whence he soon passed into England, where he resided, with short intervals, the remainder of his life, which, as I have already mentioned, was extended to a very advanced age.—He died September 20, 1703, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

He has delineated his own portrait with an agreeable vanity.—The resemblance must be acknowledged striking, though I will not pretend to deny that it is a flattering likeness. He describes himself as "Un philosophe également éloigné du
"superstitieux & de l'impie. Il se loue de la Na-
"ture; il ne se plaint point de la fortune. Il hait
"le crime, il souffre les fautes, il plaint le mal.
"heur.

"heur. Il ne s'attache point aux Ecrits les plus
 "savans pour aquerir la science; mais aux plus
 "sensés pour fortifier sa raison. En amitié plus
 "constant qu'un philosophe; a l'égard de la Re-
 "ligion,

"De Justice & de Charité,
 "Beaucoup plus que de Pénitence,
 "Il compose sa Piété:
 "Mettant en Dieu sa confiance,
 "Esperant tout de sa bonté
 "Dans le sein de la Providence,
 "Il trouve son Repos, & sa Félicité."

ESSAY XVIII.

STRICTURES *on* WALPOLE'S CATALOGUE *of*
ROYAL *and* NOBLE AUTHORS.

THERE are two extremes equally remote from justness of thinking, the Scylla and Charybdis of literature, which men of sense should be equally solicitous to avoid. The first is a tame acquiescence in vulgar opinion, the second a vain affectation of singularity. Of the first extreme it must be allowed, that the elegant writer upon whom I shall now take the liberty to offer a few critical remarks, has steered perfectly clear; but as to the second, I do not think him quite so successful. His "Historic Doubts" afford an egregious instance of false refinement and affected singularity. It is really amusing to see a writer, in the midst of all his parade of philosophical and historical scepticism, become the dupe of an imposture, by which, even that dark and credulous age in which it originated, and which was so favourable to its success, could not be long or generally deceived.—His ingenuity and acuteness only serve to fortify him in error. Mr.
Walpole

Walpole appears to me to have been misled, by considering the case of Perkin Warbeck as similar to that of the late Pretender, the legitimacy of whose birth was called in question by the prevailing faction at the era of the Revolution, without reflecting upon the great disparity of evidence attending the two cases; the legitimacy of the one, and the illegitimacy of the other, resting entirely upon improbable surmise and confident assertion. There are many observations in the volume now lying before me, which appear to me to have a considerable tincture of that fanciful and affected turn of thinking, which so remarkably predominates in the work I have already mentioned. The first article of the Catalogue may be cited as an instance.

Mr. Walpole, in contradiction to all the accounts remaining of Richard I. is unwilling to admit that celebrated Monarch to have been either a poet, or a lover of poesy; and because Roger Hoveden, the Monk, impudently and ridiculously asserts that Richard, to raise himself a name, bought and begged verses, and drew over singers and jesters from France, to chant panegyrics on him about the streets, Mr. Walpole thinks that no dependence is to be placed upon those accounts which represent him as deeply enamoured of the Muses, or, to use Mr. Walpole's own words, "as the soft lute-loving hero of poesy." Certainly, after the great exploits

which this romantic and victorious Monarch performed in Palestine, there was little occasion for him to buy or to beg verses, in order to raise himself a name. There is no contrariety, as Mr. Walpole seems to insinuate, between the warlike genius of *Cœur-de-Lion*, and his attachment to "the gay science of the Provençales;" his military ardour would be inflamed by his poetical enthusiasm, and he would appear in the eyes of his co-temporaries, no less the hero surrounded by his minstrels in the festive bower, or high-arched hall, than in the tented field, or the ensanguined plain. Sometimes, doubtless,

"The sounding strings

"Would breathe of high immortal things:"

and sometimes,

"Cupid would tune the Muse's lyre,

"To languid notes of soft desire:"

and these occupations, which appear to Mr. Walpole so inconsistent with the ambitious and restless spirit of Richard, were, however, perfectly conformable to the gallant and romantic genius of the ages of chivalry.

Of Lord Cobham Mr. Walpole observes that "he was a man whose virtues made him a reformer, whose valour a martyr, whose martyrdom an enthusiast." That his enthusiasm should make him a martyr, would excite but little wonder; but that his martyrdom should make him an enthusiast,

enthusiast, must be allowed to be no very common case. "The King, Henry V. was persuaded to undertake the conquest of France, to which kingdom they assured him he had an undoubted right. When he thought he had any to the Crown of England, the other followed of course." It seems to me, however, that the claim of his father, Henry IV. to the Crown of England, was exactly of the same nature with that of William III. which we are not accustomed to treat with quite so much contempt.

Of the character of Lord Rivers, Mr. Walpole gives us an amusing and agreeable sketch. "It is remarkable," says he, "how slightly the death of this nobleman is always mentioned, and how much we dwell on the execution of the Lord Chamberlain Hastings, a man in every light his inferior. In truth, the generality draw their ideas of English History from the tragic, rather than the historic Authors." But I presume Sir Thomas More did not draw his ideas of the reign of Richard III. from the tragic Authors, and yet he dwells upon the execution of Lord Hastings as an event of very great importance. The truth is, that Lord Hastings, notwithstanding the inferiority of his mental and corporeal accomplishments, filled a much greater space, in the eye of the nation, than Lord Rivers; and the circumstances attending his death are in themselves

much more remarkable, and make almost every villainy which is reported or furnished of Richard III. perfectly credible.

The unfortunate Earl of Essex furnishes one of the most entertaining articles in the Catalogue. I am happy to agree with Mr. Walpole in the high ideas he appears to entertain of the character and government of Queen Elizabeth; nor am I displeased at the exposure of her foibles, if accompanied with a proper sense and acknowledgment of her many great and admirable qualities and virtues. I do not, however, deem quite so highly as Mr. Walpole of her great and unfortunate favorite. The Earl of Essex was doubtless a man of great natural parts; but, intoxicated with royal favour and popular applause, he was guilty of absurdities and extravagancies, which would have disgraced any man who had pretensions to common sense. The last fatal enterprize in which he was engaged, was an astonishing proof to what desperate extremities his pride and passion were capable of transporting him. He was possessed of all those splendid and delusive qualities which are calculated to captivate the populace; but the Queen's partiality for him did not prevent her from discerning the danger to be apprehended from so turbulent and ungovernable a spirit; and if he really declared that his life was inconsistent with the Queen's safety, it is probable that the Queen and her ministers were as good judges of the truth

truth of the declaration as even Mr. Walpole.
“How was he dangerous, or could he be?”
Mr. W. asks;—“His wild attempt on the city
“had demonstrated his impotence.” This is
certainly a curious and perfectly novel mode
of vindication. A man who has committed one
act of political frenzy, may easily be supposed
capable of another; and the failure of one
treasonable attempt, does not quite amount to
a demonstration that no danger is to be ap-
prehended from the next.

“It is very extraordinary that Mr. Walpole, who
speaks of the Earl of Essex in terms of unbounded
applause, should find so little to admire in Sir Philip
Sydney, who possessed all the amiable and splendid
qualities of the Earl of Essex, without any mixture
of his extravagance. “No man,” says Mr. Walpole,
“seems to me so astonishing an object of temporary
“admiration, as the celebrated Sir P. Sydney.
“The learned of Europe dedicated their works
“to him: the Republic of Poland thought him
“at least worthy to be in the nomination for
“their Crown. All the Muses of England wept
“his death. When we at this distance of time
“enquire what prodigious merits excited such
“admiration, what do we find? Great valour.
“But it was an age of heroes. In full of all
“other talents, we have a tedious, lamentable,
“pedantic, pastoral Romance; and some ab-
“surd attempts to fetter English verse in Ro-
“man chains.”——“He died with the rash-

ness of a volunteer, after having lived to write with the *sangfroid* and prolixity of Mademoiselle Scuderi." This is writing, it must be owned, with a very fashionable air, if not of *sangfroid*, at least of *non-chalance*. But the character of the gallant, the all-accomplished Sydney, the flower of chivalry, and the mirror of knighthood, wants no assistance to repel so weak and wanton an attack. While France continues to boast her illustrious Bayard, "Le Chevalier sans peur & sans reproche," England will not fail to celebrate the heroic virtues of Sydney. Surely Mr. Walpole might have known, without being at the trouble of a very profound investigation, that, in an age which he allows to have been an age of heroes, valour alone could not have elevated Sir P. Sydney to such a distinguished height of reputation. If the learned of Europe dedicated their works to him, if the Republic of Poland thought him worthy to be put in nomination for their Crown, if all the Muses of England wept his death, if so valorous a knight as Sir Fulke Greville thought it sufficient honour to have it recorded on his tomb that he was the friend of Sir P. Sidney, Mr. Walpole might safely conclude, that his character was distinguished by far other qualities than mere valour. The truth is, that if we form our ideas of him from the accounts and representations of his co-temporaries, his character will appear "so perfect and so peerless,"

that

that it may well be supposed "created of every creature's best." As, however, it is certain, that the imperfection of human nature will not allow the same individual to excel in all things, I readily admit that the *Arcadia* is not quite equal, as a literary composition, to the "*Nouvelle Heloise*," and that the hexameters of Sydney are far inferior to the Iambics of Pope. It must be acknowledged also, that at the battle of Zutphen he gloriously offended against the laws of what Falstaff calls "the better part of valour; discretion." So did the famous Gaston de Foix, at Ravenna; so did William III. at Senneffe; yet such faults have not been thought to derogate from their character as heroes.

"Haud ignarus eram quantum nova gloria in armis
"Et prædulce decus primo certamine posset."

Such, with respect to a similar offence, is the language of a poet whom Mr. Walpole will not accuse of writing with the *sangfroid* of a Scuderi. The observations which conclude this article, respecting the Chorus of the ancient Drama, do honour to Mr. Walpole's good sense and critical sagacity.

There is an hasty remark in the entertaining account which Mr. Walpole gives us of Lord Brooke, which requires animadversion. His Lordship, in the year 1641, published "a Discourse on Episcopacy;" in which, Anthony Wood tells us, he was assisted by some puritanical ministers: "But Milton," says Mr. Walpole

Walpole, "commends it for breathing the spirit of toleration, which was not the spirit of the Puritans." Now it is most certain, that the principles of toleration originated with the Puritans, and with the most rigid and enthusiastic sect of Puritans, with which sect Milton was himself connected: so that the assertion of Wood is by no means invalidated by the observation of Mr. Walpole. "Of all the Christian sects," says Mr. Hume, "this was the first, which, during its prosperity, as well as its adversity, always adopted the principle of toleration; and it is remarkable, that so reasonable a doctrine owed its origin, not to reasoning, but to the height of extravagance and fanaticism."

In treating of the famous Earl of Glamorgan, Mr. Walpole offers a very courtly, though not a very satisfactory, vindication of the commission given by Charles I. to that nobleman, for bringing over a body of Irish Papists, during the civil wars. After the horrid devastations committed by those miscreants in Ireland, in the year 1641, no Monarch, who had any sense of generosity, or any regard to the common rights of humanity, would have had recourse to so shocking an expedient for retrieving his affairs; nor, indeed, were the King's affairs at that time in so desperate a situation as to call for so desperate a remedy. Mr. Walpole thinks Charles to be pitied, because few men in his situation would have acted better: On the

the contrary, I believe few men in his situation would have acted worse. But "could a Monarch, " who had stretched every string of prerogative, " consent," asks Mr. Walpole, " with a good " grace, to let it be curtailed?" No, certainly he could not: but it is a poor apology in behalf of a Sovereign who first tyrannizes over, and when provoked by resistance, " lets loose the dogs of war" upon his subjects, to say that it was not possible for him to recede with *a good grace*. But I am far from being inclined to become the champion of either party, during the course of these civil dissensions; and this is not the place to enter into a discussion of their respective merits.

Mr. Walpole's remarks on the character and conduct of the Earl of Sandwich are somewhat curious. " His persuading Cromwell to take the " Crown," says Mr. Walpole, " was an unaccountable infatuation; especially as his Lordship was so zealous afterwards for the Restoration." I should rather think, that Cromwell's refusal of the Crown, was an unaccountable infatuation. Whoever takes the trouble to read the conference between Cromwell, and the Committee deputed by Parliament to make the offer of the Crown, will do more justice to the arguments made use of upon that memorable occasion, than to represent them as the result of an unaccountable infatuation. I see no inconsistency in his Lordship's being afterwards zealous for the Restoration. In consequence of the confusion

confusion and anarchy which took place after the death of Cromwell, men of sense and reflection were in general convinced that a permanent settlement could be effected only by the restoration of the banished family. "It seems," says Mr. Walpole, "that the Earl had a fond and inexplicable passion for Royalty, though he had early acted against Charles I." It may be presumed, that the Earl was far from being singular in retaining his affection for a Monarchical form of Government, even when actually engaged in opposing, by force of arms, the tyrannical designs of the reigning Monarch. "The Earl admired Cromwell; yet, could he imagine that in any light a diadem would raise the Protector's character? or how could a man, who thought Cromwell deserved a Crown, think that Charles II. deserved one?" These questions admit of an obvious reply.—A diadem could not, perhaps, raise the personal character of the Protector, but it might contribute to fix his power upon a more solid and permanent basis. And it does not appear that the Earl was so much mistaken in his judgment as to suppose that either Cromwell or Charles deserved a Crown;—but he might nevertheless think, that he consulted the true interest of his country, in different political situations, in endeavouring to advance both the one and the other to the possession of a Crown. "It is often urged," says Mr. Walpole, "with great emphasis, that,

“ that, when a nation has been accustomed for
“ ages to some particular form of government,
“ it will, though that form of government may
“ be changed for a time, always revert to it;
“ No argument,” continues Mr. Walpole, “ seems
“ to me to have less solidity; for, unless the cli-
“ mate, the air, and the soil of the country, can
“ imbibe habits of government, or infuse them,
“ no country can in reality have been accus-
“ tomed to any sort of government, but during
“ the lives of its actual inhabitants.” This
argument, or this political axiom, rather, which
appears to Mr. Walpole so destitute of soli-
dity, seems to me perfectly just; and Mr. Wal-
pole’s observations upon it, I think, extremely
unphilosophical and inconclusive. I never knew
any one silly enough to suppose that the cli-
mate, air, and soil of a country, could either
imbibe or infuse habits of government; but I
imagine that Mr. Walpole will not care to
deny, that ideas of government and modes of
thinking, may be infused by education; that
opinions are usually imbibed at a very early
period of life, and that they are in general
much less the result of reason than of pre-
judice: if, then, a strong prepossession has
prevailed in any country in favour of Monar-
chy, or of any other particular form of govern-
ment, notwithstanding that by some violent re-
volution the form of government may be
changed, the prepossession will remain; and a
propensity

propensity to revert to this particular form will certainly be apparent, long after the race of men by whom, or in whose days, this revolution was effected, has ceased to exist. It is even not improbable, that those very individuals who concurred in this change of government, when any new causes of dissatisfaction arise, may feel a revival of their original attachments, and condemn with warmth their own precipitation and folly in assisting to effect a total change of government, when the public happiness might have been as effectually secured at a less expence, by a correction of abuses; and in this state of mind they will gladly risque their lives to subvert, what they before risked their lives to establish. All history furnishes abundant instances of the truth of these remarks; and the memorable revolution of 1688, in this country, is itself a striking proof how slowly and reluctantly the majority acquiesce in political innovations, though the alteration then effected amounted to far less than a radical change of constitution, and it was justified by the most urgent motives of state necessity.

“Were men,” asks Mr. Walpole, “born late in the reign of Charles I. bred to entertain irradicable prejudices in favour of Royalty?” To this question I answer, that men born late in the reign of Charles I. were as likely to entertain prejudices in favour of monarchy, as men born at any other time.—It is well known that the more

der

der of the King was effected by the leaders of the army, inflamed by a spirit of religious fanaticism, as well as political frenzy, and that the Parliament never gave the public sanction to that act, which was regarded with horror and execration by a great majority of the nation.—“It is supposed,” says Mr. Walpole, “that no country is so naturally propense to liberty as England. Is it naturally propense to monarchy too?” By being naturally propense to liberty Mr. Walpole probably means, that no country has shewn so strong and durable an attachment to liberty as England; which I believe is true as to modern nations: but I know not why that should be thought inconsistent with its being “naturally propense,” as Mr. Walpole styles it, or strongly attached to monarchy too. “Is monarchy the natural vehicle of liberty?” Mr. Walpole asks. It is difficult to give an answer to a question so quaintly worded. Whether monarchy is the natural vehicle of liberty I will not venture to decide; because I am not certain that I understand the question. But I assert, without the least hesitation, that liberty is best secured under a monarchical form of government; and I appeal to the admirable treatise of M. De Lolme, for the most satisfactory demonstration of this great truth; and this I believe has long been a prevailing opinion in this country, though Mr. Walpole seems to represent it as a sort of contradiction in terms.

Upon

Upon that celebrated couple, the Duke and Duchess of Newcastle, I think Mr. Walpole has been unreasonably severe. A slight inspection of her dusty and worm-eaten *tomes*, will convince any impartial judge that the Duchess, notwithstanding her conceit and pedantry, was a woman of parts and genius. Of her poetical powers, the 69th Paper of the *Connoisseur* exhibits no unfavourable specimen. There is something offensive in the reflections cast upon the Duke and his noble co-temporary, the Marquis of Winchester, who, with a romantic generosity and inflexible loyalty, expended their immense fortunes in support of their Sovereign in his distress; and when reduced to poverty and distress themselves, sought for consolation in literary amusements. Notwithstanding Mr. Walpole's disdain, it was certainly a proof of admirable equanimity, or rather magnanimity, when they found their utmost efforts in the cause of Royalty unavailable, to be able to accommodate their minds to what Mr. W. styles "the idlenesses of literature." Nor were the literary productions of these celebrated Noblemen considered in their own age as by any means contemptible. If the Duke of Buckingham is applauded as the author of the *Rehearsal*, why is the Duke of Newcastle exhibited as a subject of ridicule, for writing "*The Humorous Lovers*," or "*The Triumphant Widow*?"

Of Mr. Walpole's short account of the famous Earl of Shaftesbury, much is exceptionable.

Mr.

Mr. Walpole relates, upon the authority of Bishop Burnet, a ridiculous story of Shaftesbury's pretending that Cromwell offered to make him King. "If he did," says Mr. Walpole, "it only proves that Cromwell took him for a fool." But if Cromwell took Shaftesbury for a fool, it only proves that Cromwell made a most egregious blunder. The abilities of Cromwell do not appear to me to rise much above the common standard. His military talents, seconded by the most daring resolution, and unprincipled ambition, were the true causes of his wonderful success; and Fairfax and Monk, had they been equally destitute of honour and probity, might have risen to the same height of power: but the abilities of Lord Shaftesbury were certainly of the first class, far above the reach of Burnet's comprehension. "He had a particular talent," says the Right Reverend Historian, "to make others trust to his judgment, and depend upon it; but he had a rambling way of talking, and understood nothing to the bottom. Nevertheless, he had a wonderful faculty in speaking to a popular assembly, and brought over so many to a submission to his opinion, that no man was ever known equal to him in the art of governing parties, and making himself the head of them." It should seem that the learned Prelate considered the commanding genius of this great demagogue as somewhat a-kin to conjuration. He seems as much at a loss to account for the ascendancy which Shaftesbury acquired over the

persons with whom he was connected, as the judges of the famous Leonora de Galigai, wife of Marshal D'Ancre, who at her trial was interrogated by what magical powers she had gained so absolute an influence over the mind of Mary of Medicis, her royal mistress; to which she nobly replied, that she used no other powers than those which a strong mind naturally possesses over a weak one. When the portrait of so great a man as Lord Shaftesbury is delineated by so wretched a dauber as Burnet, we may expect to find it what in fact it is, miserably defective in drawing, colouring, and resemblance.

Mr. Walpole enters more at large into the character of the Earl of Anglesey, Lord Privy Seal, though a much less remarkable personage; the acrimony with which Mr. Walpole attacks this nobleman, seems to me void of any just foundation. Bishop Burnet, indeed, in his gross and brutal manner, affirms, "that he stuck at nothing, and " was ashamed of nothing; that he was neither " loved nor trusted by any man nor any side; that " he seemed to have no regard to common decencies; that he sold himself so often, that at last the " price fell so low that he grew useless." This character, though so opposite to the whole tenor of the Earl's life and conduct, seems to have been received by Mr. Walpole with implicit credulity. In answer to the Bishop's charge, that he was neither loved nor trusted, the authors of the *Biographia Britannica* justly observe, that he enjoyed the confidence

fidence of King Charles II. for more than twenty years. Mr. Walpole is pleased to deny the fact; but certainly the assertion of the *Biographia* is true in that sense, which is most honourable for the Earl's reputation. He was not, indeed, admitted to that degree of confidence which Shaftesbury, Buckingham, and Arlington once enjoyed; but if he had not possessed a considerable share of the King's esteem and regard, it is absurd to suppose that he would have retained his high offices for so long a period. Nor does it appear that he forfeited his reputation with the patriotic party; for I do not recollect any parliamentary complaints against the Lord Privy Seal, during the whole reign of Charles II. or any impeachment of his public conduct; and his disgrace was at last occasioned by a too zealous vindication of himself from an imputation which related to his conduct when Commissioner in Ireland, thirty years before. "But," says Mr. Walpole, "if the fact were true, it would be no justification."—No justification! then the apologists of the Earl are engaged in a hopeless attempt indeed. His being trusted by the King for twenty years, is not indeed a justification from all the accusations which falsehood and malice may invent, but it certainly is a complete justification from that charge, which stigmatizes him as a man whom no one would trust. As to the infamous accusation of "selling himself so often that the price fell so low that he at last grew useless," it is so destitute of common sense and common decency, that it can only be con-

sidered as a proof that the Right Reverend Historian, to use his own words, "stuck at nothing," and was ashamed of nothing," which contributed to gratify his own malignant disposition. Of Burnet it may be truly said, that "his tongue out-venoms all the worms of Nile."

Mr. Walpole mentions an idle report, that Lord Anglesey, had he lived, would have been raised to the dignity of Chancellor, by James II. but a man who had the courage to oppose, almost alone, the bill of attainder against the Duke of Monmouth, was not likely, surely, to receive so signal a mark of royal favour. Mr. Walpole next charges the Earl with servile complaisance, and glaring injustice, for sitting in judgment upon the rигicides. "The Earl had gone most lengths with those men; in short, had acted with them in open rebellion to his Sovereign. The putting to death that Sovereign, could by no means be the guilty part of their opposition. If a King deserves to be opposed by force of arms, he deserves death: if he reduces his subjects to that extremity, the executing him afterwards is a mere formality." The premises from which Mr. Walpole deduces his conclusion, are false both in theory and fact: it is theoretically false, that every Monarch whom it is justifiable to oppose by force of arms, deserves death; and it is historically false, that the Earl had gone most lengths with the rигicides. It is well known that the Parliament, of which the Earl was a leading member, never entertained an idea of de-throning

throning the King, much less of bringing him to the block. Though they had engaged in what Mr. Walpole chuses to call open rebellion to their Sovereign, they regarded the public execution of the King as something more than a mere formality; and they were fully persuaded, that there was no just ground for proceeding to that dreadful and desperate extremity. It was a military faction which effected that tragical catastrophe, after committing the most atrocious acts of violence upon the Parliament, for which they most justly deserved to pay the forfeit of their lives; and the Earl could never act a more honourable or consistent part, than in condemning those wretches to the block, who had been guilty of the treason of subverting the constitution. It is astonishing that men of Mr. Walpole's knowledge and discernment cannot, or will not, perceive the difference between that opposition to the regal power which had, and that which had not, the sanction of parliamentary authority.

I do not scruple to declare that, after the ample concessions made by Charles, there appears to me no sufficient ground for taking up arms against the King; it was nevertheless the duty of a good citizen, in my apprehension, in a case of this nature, to acquiesce in the judgment of Parliament, and when hostilities actually commenced, to range himself under the banners of liberty; but when the war was successfully concluded, and a final accommodation had taken place, or was on the point of taking place, between the King and the Parliament, it

must surely be regarded as the height of moral and political depravity, in a set of desperadoes and fanatics, to usurp the executive and legislative powers, to deprive the Parliament of its authority, the King of his life, and to effect the utter subversion of the established constitution; and yet the noble Earl is branded with glaring injustice, for sitting in judgment upon those miscreants. I do not chuse to tax Mr. Walpole with glaring injustice, but from the charge of glaring absurdity I think he will not find it easy to vindicate this harsh and unmerited censure. "That his Lordship failed with the times," says Mr. Walpole, "remains notorious; those principles must be of an accommodating temper, which could suffer the same man to be President of a Republican Council of State, and recommend him for Chancellor to an arbitrary and Popish King." The charge against the Earl of Anglesey for failing with the times, is ridiculous. Can it be denied that he used his utmost efforts, as an honest and able statesman, to stem the torrent? That he submitted to the usurpation of Cromwell, is a crime common to his Lordship with the whole nation. The Earl was not so arrant a political Quixote, as to oppose an established government, without some probability of success; and it is certain that he embraced, with ardour, the first favourable opportunity that offered for restoring the King and Constitution; and if he was "well rewarded," it is no less certain that he well deserved to be rewarded for his signal services upon that memorable occasion,

occasion. As to the proof here given by Mr. Walpole, of his accommodating principles, I see nothing dishonourable in his accepting of the office of President of the Council of State, under the Republic; and if Mr. Walpole's memory had not strangely failed him in writing this article, he must have recollected, that in the preceding page he had himself allowed, that the supposition of his being appointed Chancellor to James II. was highly improbable. "Once," continues Mr. Walpole, "when the Earl of Effex charged him in the House of Lords with being prayed for by the Papists, Anglesey said, he believed it was not so; but if Jews in their synagogues, or Turks in their mosques, would pray for him unasked, he should be glad to be the better for their devotion. Had he really been nominated to the Chancellorship by James II. probably he would have pleaded that it was not of his own seeking, but owing to the prayers of the Catholics, and he was glad to be the better for them." In this passage we have a curious specimen of Mr. Walpole's candour.—Because the Earl upon one occasion replied to a malicious insinuation, like a wise and an honest man, Mr. Walpole thinks it probable that upon another he would have answered like a buffoon and a knave. If I have been too diffuse, or too warm in my vindication of the Earl of Anglesey, who, to say the truth, is not a very interesting or important character in the annals of English history, it may perhaps be admitted as some sort of apology, that I am myself a descendant

of this noble Earl; and I really believe, from all the information public or private which I have been able to obtain of his Lordship's character and conduct, that he was a man by no means deficient either in understanding or in probity.

The character of Lord Somers is drawn with that happy delicacy, to use Mr. Walpole's words upon another occasion, which finishes while it only seems to sketch.

Of the Earl of Orford, the famous Sir Robert Walpole, Mr. Walpole affirms, that sixteen unfortunate and inglorious years since his removal, have written the eulogium. It is but justice, however, to the memory of Mr. Pelham, to say, that the years succeeding the peace of Aix la Chapelle, to the end of the life of that honest and able Minister, were neither unfortunate nor inglorious.

Mr. Walpole, in his great zeal to invalidate the title of Lady Jane Grey, which was certainly one of the weakest that ever insulted the understanding of any nation, appears to me to adopt a very dangerous maxim in politics, viz. That the power given by Parliament to King Henry VIII. to regulate the succession, not being founded on national expediency, could be of no force.—Who is the proper judge of national expediency in this case; the Legislature, or a private individual?

Upon Mr. Walpole's account of the celebrated Lord Falkland, there is much scope for animadversion. A writer who could characterize this gallant,

gallant, patriotic and virtuous nobleman, as a "weak but well-meaning man, who got knocked on the head early in the civil war, because it boded ill," must surely have taken some pains to repress the emotions of sympathetic and generous sensibility. That Lord Falkland was not a weak man, whatever Mr. Walpole may imagine, is sufficiently evident, as well from the various productions of his pen, as from the high reputation he acquired with his co-temporaries, for understanding as well as integrity. It is easily conceivable that Lord Falkland, though he had acted with Hampden and the Patriots, might believe it to be his duty to join the royal party, after the great sacrifices the King had made; and though the danger to be apprehended from the success of the King's arms, and the undoubted right of Parliament to judge whether the concessions made by the Crown, were sufficient to secure the Constitution from future attacks, should, I think, have inclined him to adopt a different line of conduct, it is absurd to represent his erroneous choice as a proof of a defect of understanding. Upon that great occasion, men of equal abilities, knowledge, and integrity, would, doubtless, as in every other situation of importance and difficulty, see things in very different points of view. His indulgence of melancholy, and his disregard of life, in the critical and dangerous state of public affairs, after the commencement of the war, may indeed be justly considered as extremely culpable: but such faults are too rare,

rare; and proceed from motives too generous and noble, to make it necessary to treat them with such contemptuous and sarcastic levity.

I know not whether any apology be necessary to Mr. Walpole, for the freedom of animadversion which I have indulged in these remarks—If I may presume to judge of his feelings in this instance by my own, he will not deem it any just ground of offence that writings, which by the very act of publication are submitted to the public censure, should be considered as the proper subject of free criticism. That reserve and ceremony with which it is usual to oppose each other's sentiments in conversation would, in a more public discussion, appear tedious and trifling formality; and the laws of propriety and decorum are not violated in one case, by a deviation from those maxims which were established for the regulation of our conduct in another.

ESSAY XIX.

On MATERIALISM.

A JUSTLY celebrated Christian Divine and Philosopher has excited the attention of the learned world in general, and the astonishment and indignation of a great part of it, by the publication of a treatise written in defence of the system of Materialism; in which he attempts to prove, contrary to the opinions which have been almost universally prevalent in the Christian Church for a long succession of ages, that man does not consist of two substances essentially different from each other; but that the conscious principle, or what we generally term the Soul, is merely a property resulting from such an organical structure as that of the brain. It follows, as an immediate and necessary consequence, from this hypothesis, that the idea of the natural immortality of the Soul is wholly fallacious, as the properties of thought and sensation must of course be extinguished at the dissolution of that system of organized matter to which they appertain. This opinion has long been considered as a tenet peculiar to infidelity; and

Materialism

Materialism has been held in almost as much abhorrence by the generality of Christians, as Atheism itself. The arguments of so able a writer as Dr. Priestley must, however, be entitled to a deliberate and impartial examination; and when we know that so learned a divine, and so acute a metaphysician, does not deem the system of Materialism inconsistent with the belief and profession of Christianity, it should incline us to abate somewhat of our prejudice against this obnoxious opinion, and to exercise that candour in investigating the subject, which we should perhaps be apt to discard as too nearly allied to criminal indifference for religion, when controverting the supposed heresies of Spinoza, Hobbes, or Collins.

In this Essay I propose to exhibit a general view, both of the popular and unpopular hypothesis relative to this subject, and of the arguments by which they are severally supported, and to offer a few remarks upon each. And, First, the Immaterialists urge, as a proof equally clear, concise, and conclusive, as a proof nothing short of demonstration of the essential difference between matter and spirit, that the principle of perception, or consciousness, being in its own nature a simple, unextended, and indivisible power, must inhere in a simple, unextended, and indivisible substance; whereas, the properties of solidity and extension are absolutely essential to matter, which is therefore necessarily a discernible substance,

stance, consisting of separable, nay, of actually separate and distinct parts; and as the whole can contain nothing more than the sum or aggregate of the powers or qualities inherent in all its parts, a system of matter, however exquisite its structure or organization, cannot be possessed of consciousness or perception, unless consciousness be supposed to be an inherent property of matter: and upon this hypothesis, if matter be infinitely divisible, consciousness must likewise be infinitely divisible, which is a gross absurdity: or if matter be ultimately reducible to indivisible particles, each particle must possess a certain degree of perception, and then the simple and individual power of perception belonging to a system of matter, such as the brain, must consist of a multitude of distinct and separate perceptions, belonging to its several component particles, which is a palpable contradiction: it is evident, then, to a demonstration, that the principle of perception is an immaterial principle; and if an immaterial, an immortal principle; for a substance which has, as far as we can perceive, no properties in common with matter, cannot, without a manifest absurdity, be supposed affected, much less annihilated, by the dissolution of that material system to which it is, by divine power, for a certain period united.—Death, in fact, is nothing more than the separation of soul and body, and when disincumbered from this gross material vehicle, the immortal spirit will doubtless take its flight into the regions of empyreum,

reum, emancipated from every species of disorder and indisposition, derived from the contagion of flesh and blood.

Exclusive, however, of this grand and demonstrative argument in favour of the system of Immaterialism, there are various considerations which should induce us to believe that matter and spirit are substances essentially distinct from each other, and that the conscious principle does not depend upon any organical material system for its existence or support. The immortality, and consequently the immateriality, of the soul, may be strongly argued from the almost universal assent of mankind, and from "that eager hope, that strong desire, that "longing after immortality," accompanied with "that inward dread and secret horror of falling into "nought," which operates so powerfully throughout the rational creation, and from which the inferior orders of animal beings are wholly exempt. Why should our omnipotent and beneficent Creator implant in our minds these delusive hopes? Why should he excite desires which are never to be satisfied? Why hold out to our view a prospect of happiness to which we can never attain? Do not our minds revolt at the idea, that a mode of conduct so arbitrary and capricious, can be adopted by a Being infinite in wisdom and goodness? Surely we shall not dare to ascribe principles of government and action to the Deity, by which we should think even humanity degraded!

But

But it may be farther urged, that man is plainly in his own nature, an accountable creature; he is endowed with powers and faculties of a very exalted kind. These powers he is equally capable of applying to the best and to the worst purposes; by the proper use and application of them, he may attain to the love and practice of every virtue, and by the neglect or abuse of them, he will certainly sink into the lowest abysses of vice and depravity. Can it be imagined, then, that the great Being who gave us reason and understanding, that we might know how to refuse the evil and choose the good; who gave us freedom of agency, in order to enable us to make that choice: who gave us conscience to serve as a perpetual monitor within our breasts, pointing out our duty to us, exhorting us to the strict performance of it, and silently warning us of the danger of acting contrary to its dictates—Can it be imagined, that He will permit these noble faculties to be abused, these warnings to be despised, and these obvious designs of his Providence to be counteracted with impunity? “If there is a God, he must delight in virtue, and that which he delights in must be happy;” and as happiness is not an invariable concomitant of virtue, nor misery of vice, in this life, it is certain that a future day of retribution must arrive: and the immortality of the Soul is a doctrine, without which it is not possible to establish the rectitude of the Divine Nature, or the justice of the Divine Government, upon a solid or satisfactory foundation.

Again,

Again, if we make our appeal to fact and experience, we shall find the result equally conclusive in favour of the immaterial, and consequently the immortal nature of the Soul's essence. Every man, by reflecting upon the operations of his own mind, may easily be convinced that the conscious principle is something totally different from that corporeal frame in which it resides, and which, being itself inert, must receive life and animation from this intimate and mysterious union. It is as impossible, strictly and philosophically speaking, that perception should be a property of the brain, however exquisite its organical structure, as that the most irregular and fortuitous combination of the same impercipient particles should possess this power; and though it must be allowed, that the brain is in some inexplicable manner instrumental to thought, as the eye is to vision, or the ear to hearing, yet the faculty of perception, and the organ, by means of which that faculty is actually exerted, surely ought not to be confounded. When the eye happens to be closed, or when it is enveloped in darkness, the Soul certainly has not lost its *faculty* of seeing, though by a temporary obstruction the exercise of that faculty may for a short space be suspended, and when the mental powers seem to be injured and impaired through age or disease, it is not that the immaterial immortal substance is in any respect changed, or capable of change: these symptoms of decay can only be occasioned by the partial derangement of that material system, which must at
last

last suffer a total dissolution, and when the soul, or conscious principle, is separated from the body by death, "it will then be bare to the immediate impression of objects, and the hand which feels an object at the end of a staff, may certainly be allowed to feel the same much better by immediate contact." Wollast. Rel. of N. Sect. 9. § 7.

Lastly, It is urged by Christian Immaterialists, that the sacred Scriptures, in a variety of passages, expressly assert the separate existence of the soul, and clearly and plainly inculcate the doctrine of its natural immortality; a doctrine which was almost universally received by the learned amongst the Jews, at the period of Christ's Incarnation, as well as by that part of the heathen world which embraced the Platonic system of Philosophy, a system which at that period, and for many ages afterwards, was distinguished by its prevalence and popularity, no less than its intrinsic excellence; and in this point, at least, its perfect consonance to the dictates of right reason, confirmed by the express declarations of the Christian revelation.

The Advocates for Materialism, on the other hand, profess to hold these and the like arguments in sovereign contempt, and endeavour to establish their own hypothesis, by reasons which appear to them of a much more obvious and convincing nature. The arguments urged by our opponents, say they, are deduced either from metaphysical considerations, relating to the essence and properties of

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Lastly, It is urged by Christian Immaterialists, that the sacred Scriptures, in a variety of passages, expressly assert the separate existence of the soul, and clearly and plainly inculcate the doctrine of its natural immortality; a doctrine which was almost universally received by the learned amongst the Jews, at the period of Christ's Incarnation, as well as by that part of the heathen world which embraced the Platonic system of Philosophy, a system which at that period, and for many ages afterwards, was distinguished by its prevalence and popularity, no less than its intrinsic excellence; and in this point, at least, its perfect consonance to the dictates of right reason, confirmed by the express declarations of the Christian revelation.

The Advocates for Materialism, on the other hand, profess to hold these and the like arguments in sovereign contempt, and endeavour to establish their own hypothesis, by reasons which appear to them of a much more obvious and convincing nature. The arguments urged by our opponents, say they, are deduced either from metaphysical considerations, relating to the essence and properties of

matter and spirit, or from the moral attributes of the Deity, discoverable by the light of nature, or from the express declarations of the sacred Scriptures. As to the pretended metaphysical demonstration of the essential difference between matter and spirit, founded upon the unity of consciousness belonging to the one, and the discernibility characteristic of the other, nothing can be more weak and inconclusive; for if we suppose, and all appearances lead us to suppose, this unity of consciousness to result from a peculiar system of organization, it is evident that the matter of which the organized system is composed, being deranged or separated, the power of perception, though not capable of division, will cease, or become extinct. That perception should result from any composition or combination of impercipient particles, must indeed be acknowledged to bear the appearance of a difficulty; but it is a difficulty by no means insuperable, when we recollect that in almost innumerable instances, complete systems or integral combinations of matter, possess properties entirely different from those which appertain to its several component parts. Sphericity, for instance, is a property belonging to a complete globe, of which the component particles are entirely destitute: the most common piece of mechanism, a watch, a harpsichord, or a telescope, must also be allowed to possess powers resulting from the skilful arrangement of the several parts specifically different from those which inhere in the parts themselves: and shall we venture, blind and ignorant

ignorant as we are, to affirm, that the Divine Artificer cannot so arrange and organize those material particles which compose the human frame, as to produce a system which shall possess properties different from those which inhere in each distinct particle? If, however, this should rashly and impiously be pronounced impossible, and the principle of perception should be deemed a substance essentially different from matter, and superadded by Divine power to the organized system, unless we wish to amuse ourselves with words destitute of real meaning, we shall soon be convinced how little advantage the Immaterialist can derive from this concession. To the term substance we can affix no other idea, than that it is the unknown support of certain known properties: if this definition conveys any meaning, it is certainly extremely dark and obscure; and who can pretend to be so intimately acquainted with the arcana of nature, as to be able to demonstrate that the substance by which the property of perception is at present supported, will be adequate to its support when disunited from that material system, by the instrumentality of which every act of perception is exerted. It is well known, that all our ideas and perceptions are derived from the impressions made on the brain by the different organs of sense; and though the abstract power, or principle of perception, should be supposed to remain after the final dissolution of the corporeal system, it is a power which cannot be proved to exist by any effect; the different organs of sense being indispensably neces-

sary to the exertion of this power; it must therefore remain dormant and inactive, till it is again united to a material vehicle; and this is, in fact, the opinion, however wild and fanciful it may seem, of those Christians who, stiling themselves Immaterialists, maintain a suspension of consciousness in the interval between death and the resurrection. But if we exclude the idea of a resurrection, it may be asked, what is the difference between such a state of unconsciousness and absolute annihilation? The material organized system is dissolved; perception has totally ceased; and nothing remains, but the immaterial substance, or the unknown support of a non-existing property. A man must surely have a strange attachment to particular terms and phrases, who can satisfy himself with such an unintelligible salvo as this, in order to pass for an Immaterialist.—How much more consistent and candid would it be to acknowledge, without reserve, that man is of an uniform composition, and that perception is the property or result of such an organical structure as that of the brain? Indeed it is highly unphilosophical, and a mere arbitrary supposition, to maintain the existence of two principles essentially different in the same being, if all the properties of this individual being can inhere in the same substance; and where is the inconsistency of supposing perception compatible with extension and solidity?—It is impossible, indeed, for us to explain how perception results from a material substance; but is it not equally impossible to form any conjecture how it results from an

an immaterial substance? It is sufficient to ascertain the fact, and the fact is sufficiently ascertained.—“ I see a man move, and hear him speak ; from his speech I certainly infer, that he thinks as I do. I see, then, that man is a being who thinks and acts.—After some time the man falls down in my sight, grows cold and stiff.—He speaks and acts no more. Is it not, then, reasonable to conclude, that he thinks no more? As the only reason I had to believe that he did think, was his motion and speech, so, now that this motion and speech cease, I have lost the only way of proving that he had a power of thought. Whence can I infer that the man consists of two parts, and that the inward part continues to live and think, when the outward part ceases to live and move?—His motion and thought die together, as far as I can discern.” Hallet’s Disc. p. 213.

As to the argument drawn from internal feeling, and from the supposed consciousness in every man, that the principle of perception is a substance essentially different from matter, and not a mere property of matter, it is almost too futile for notice. All that any man can possibly be conscious of, by reflecting upon the operations of his own mind is, that he is possessed of “ the power of perception:” but whether this power resides in a divisible or indivisible, a material or immaterial substance, must be determined, if it can be determined at all, by reasoning ; and those facts upon

which our reasonings must be founded, are obviously contrary to any such conclusion. To affirm that perception cannot arise from, or be superadded as an adventitious property, to any organical system of matter, is to begin and end a controversy by begging the question. If the immaterial substance in which perception resides, has, as the generality of Immaterialists assert, no properties in common with matter, how is it possible for the two substances mutually to act and re-act upon each other? A substance destitute of properties, is a mere name; and two substances possessed of properties specifically different, no more exist, with relation to each other, than if they were entirely destitute of properties. This is a difficulty of such magnitude, that the celebrated Dr. Clarke and others have allowed extension or expansion to be a property common to both: and indeed it seems self-evident, that whatever exists must exist somewhere, or in some part of infinite space, and must occupy some portion of space; *i. e.* must have figure and extension. But if the immaterial substance of the soul has figure and extension, what becomes of the argument drawn from the indiscernibility of the thinking substance? Whatever is possessed of finite extension, must certainly in its own nature be capable of division; and perception, though in itself a property incapable of division, if admitted to be the property of a substance capable of division, may certainly be deemed the property of a material, as consistently as of an immaterial substance; for though
matter

matter be possessed of solidity as well as extension, He must be an able metaphysician indeed, who can demonstrate that extension is, and solidity is not, compatible with perception. Not to mention that what is generally stiled solidity, or impenetrability, may really be nothing more than a power of repulsion; that power alone being fully adequate to the solution of all the phænomena relative to matter, usually ascribed to solidity. But enough, surely, has now been urged to expose the weakness and vanity of this pretended demonstration, which places the natural immortality of a man precisely upon the same foundation with the natural immortality of the "poor beetle that we tread upon;" which is equally endowed with the power of perception, and which, as the great Poet remarks,

"In corporal sufferance feels a pang as great
As when a giant dies."

But there are other arguments deduced from the consideration of the moral attributes of God, which are represented as decisive proofs of the immortality and consequent immateriality of the soul: and to these arguments certainly every man who wishes to promote the best interests of mankind, would willingly allow all the weight and force of which they are in their own nature capable. It is, however, highly unbecoming a philosopher and lover of truth, to feign a conviction which he does not feel; and it must not be disguised, that these arguments so favourable to natural religion, but which seem in a great measure to supersede the necessity

of a divine revelation, are a very frail foundation to build our hopes of immortality upon. Reason assures us of nothing farther concerning the natural or moral attributes of the Deity than can be inferred from the phænomena of nature.—From these we may certainly infer the eternal existence of a first cause of infinite power and wisdom; but of the infinite goodness of this great Being, though benevolence evidently appears to predominate in the works of creation, the proof is materially defective. Justice, holiness, truth, rectitude, &c. as applied to the Deity, are only modifications of goodness; and it is asserted on the one side, and admitted on the other, that these attributes cannot be fully vindicated, but upon the supposition of a future state of retribution, which implies the doctrine of the soul's immortality: and it is certainly true, that the doctrine of the natural immortality of the soul, may, with very good effect, be applied to the vindication of the moral attributes of God; and, on the other hand, the moral attributes of God may be applied, with equal success, to prove the doctrine of the soul's immortality; there is, indeed, this perplexing circumstance attending the proof of each, that you must suppose the truth of the one, in order to prove the truth of the other. Unfortunately, natural phænomena are unfavourable to each, separately considered; and as it is necessary to prove the truth of one, without the assistance of the other, unless your adversary has the complaisance to dispense with the common rules of logic, the difficulty of knowing

knowing where to begin seems absolutely insuperable. It is evidently arguing in a circle, to say, that the Divine justice and goodness prove the doctrine of the soul's immortality, and that the doctrine of a future retribution proves that God is possessed of the attributes of infinite justice and goodness; neither the one nor the other can be satisfactorily and fully proved, upon the principles of natural reason: and this it is which makes a divine revelation so peculiarly necessary, and so highly valuable. Christianity informs us, that though a suspension of consciousness will take place upon a dissolution of the present material system, a day will arrive, when God will illustriously display his power, by restoring that organical system upon which thought and perception depend; and in that day he will himself vindicate his own attributes, by judging the world in righteousness. The Resurrection is that great event which Christ came into the world to promulgate, and which he died and rose again to establish by the most indubitable evidence. It is the grand, the fundamental doctrine of Christianity; and if there are a few passages of scripture which seem to intimate a continuation of consciousness in a separate state, it would be easy to show, if this was intended for a theological dissertation, that the true meaning of these passages has been greatly misapprehended. The doctrine of the Gospel is, that the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised, and that

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this mortal shall then, and not till then, put on immortality. The Christian doctrine of a resurrection has, by some, indeed, been represented, although very injuriously, as amounting to an express contradiction. If, say they, thought and perception arise from certain modifications of matter, when the material system, so modified, is dissolved, the percipient principle is wholly annihilated—it is a non-entity; and the resurrection of a non-entity is a palpable absurdity; but, surely, if thought and perception necessarily result from any organical system, the restoration of that organical system, though it had been dissolved ten thousand ages, must also be accompanied with a restoration of the powers of thought and sensation. By restoring the former arrangement, thought and sensation would return as necessarily and mechanically, as shape and figure would return. If, however, perception should be supposed a quality not inherent in matter, but superadded to it by Divine power, doubtless, the same Divine power which originally produced, could re-produce and annex the same consciousness to the same system at his pleasure. We see, in fact, that perception may be totally suspended, and afterwards restored; as in the case of trances, deliquium, suffocation, &c. But surely it is as easy to Almighty Power to restore a suspended animation and consciousness, after the lapse of a thousand years, as of one day or one moment: if the thing itself be not impossible, it is
absurd

absurd to suppose that the length or shortness of the interval can either create or remove any real difficulty.

I shall now conclude this Essay, as I proposed, with a few remarks. And after the most attentive and impartial examination of which I am capable, I must acknowledge that the argument so much relied upon by the Immaterialists, seems to me clearly to prove that perception is not, and cannot possibly be, philosophically speaking, a property, *i. e.* an innate property of matter. It appears to me an absolute contradiction, that perception should arise from any combination of impercipient particles; a whole can never possess a property which does not inhere in the parts. The instances of the globe, watch, harpsichord, &c. have not the most distant tendency to invalidate this truth. They are only so many different combinations of figure, motion, &c. qualities, of which all the component particles of these machines are possessed; and the power of the whole is evidently the result of the united powers of all the parts. To make the cases parallel, matter, as such, must be endued with perception; which appears to me an atheistical idea, and, like all other atheistical ideas, grossly absurd. Matter is infinitely divisible.—Is perception infinitely divisible? Or matter is, we will suppose, reducible to solid, primary, percipient particles.—Is the perception of a human being the result of an infinite

infinite number of inferior and subordinate perceptions? The Immaterialists have reason to triumph, when they reduce their adversaries to the necessity of answering these questions in the affirmative. On the other hand, when the Immaterialists confidently affirm, that perception is the property of an immaterial substance, which will continue to subsist after the dissolution of the present mortal and perishable frame, they seem to me to affirm what it is impossible to prove—to affirm what is unsupported, or rather contradicted, by the appearances of nature, and the deductions of reason. Perception I believe to be a property superadded to matter, in a manner somewhat analogous to gravity. The idea of innate perception, as well as of innate gravity, may be justly exploded; but perception may nevertheless be regarded as a property annexed to certain combinations of matter, by the Supreme Being, and as a property which will not subsist separate from those organical systems, to which it is, by Divine Power, for a certain period united. The plain dictate of reason, in this case is, that at death the dust returns to the earth again, and the spirit unto God who gave it.

The arguments deduced from the consideration of the moral attributes of God, though scarcely amounting to probability, seem to me of more weight than this boasted demonstration. It must be owned, indeed, that the moral perfections of the

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the Divine Nature, and the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, cannot be employed as reciprocal proofs of each other. But I think that the phenomena of Nature, attentively considered, strongly indicate the boundless extent of the moral as well as the natural perfections of the Deity. As the power and wisdom of God are infinite, there is a strong presumption from analogy that his goodness is also infinite. We see that the course of Providence is upon the whole favourable to virtue; we see a connection established, though a very imperfect one, between virtue and happiness, vice and misery, in the present life; and if there is sufficient reason to admit that this connection results from the eternal purpose of the Divine Will, what should prevent its final and complete accomplishment? If virtue is the object of the Divine complacency and approbation, it will certainly be ultimately rewarded with happiness, however unfavourable present appearances may be. "What shall separate us from the love of God," exclaims the Apostle Paul, under the animating influence of this persuasion, "Neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come."

I shall only add, that the Scripture doctrine respecting a future state, appears to me to be conformable to the sentiments of the Materialists, and those nominal Immaterialists who reject the opinion of an intermediate conscious state between death and the resurrection. It is impossible to suppose,

suppose that the Resurrection, upon which so much stress is placed in Scripture, as affording an immoveable foundation for "a most blessed and glorious hope," should refer merely to the resurrection of the body, which, according to the principles of the Immaterialists, ought rather to be deprecated as a real misfortune. At the same time I acknowledge, that several passages of the sacred writings, separately considered, seem not easily reconcilable to this hypothesis. It cannot, however, be pretended, with any colour of plausibility, even by unbelievers, that there could be any real inconsistency in the opinions of the first Christians, respecting a point of this nature; and therefore the seeming import of a few detached passages, obviously inconsistent with the general tenor of the apostolic writings, need not prevent us from embracing, with a full assurance of faith, a doctrine supported by plain, repeated and unequivocal declarations.

ESSAY XX.

OBSERVATIONS *on* GENIUS.

WHAT is Genius? A certain writer of respectable abilities, who has treated this subject according to the too general practise of his countrymen, with much parade of systematic investigation, has composed a volume of five hundred pages, in answer to this enquiry; and if we may confide in the positive determination of Dr. Gerard, Genius is only another word for Invention: and having thus ascertained the import of the term, he tells us, what I should suppose few persons are ignorant of, that Imagination is that power of the mind to which Invention must be principally referred; and, as if this was a doubtful point, he expatiates largely upon it, and establishes and enforces it, by all the powers of reason and eloquence. Imagination, however, being at length demonstrated in all the forms of logic, to be that faculty which is the immediate source of Invention, the learned Professor enters into a minute analysis of those general laws of association, which
produce

produce the several modifications of which the imagination is susceptible. We are informed, with an air of mysterious gravity, that the imagination does not act at random in associating ideas; but that there are certain qualities or relations of ideas, which fit them for being associated; and the author, after Mr. Hume, resolves those relations into resemblance, contrariety, vicinity, co-existence, &c. and we are told that habit, and the passions also, have an extensive influence on the associating principle. We are next amused with an account of the modifications of the associating principles, and many other abstruse metaphysical disquisitions which seem to me very slightly connected with the main subject, and which, in my opinion, have been much more happily and satisfactorily discussed, though with much less ostentation of knowledge, by Locke, Hartley, and Hume. I see not, for my own part, what light is thrown upon the question relative to the nature of Genius, by a long and tedious analysis of the faculty of association, which operates in perfect conformity to the same general laws in all men, whether they are possessed or not of any extraordinary powers of imagination or Genius. But, to wave any farther observations on the mode in which the learned Professor has chosen to treat this subject, I shall content myself with objecting to the first step taken by Dr. Gerard in the investigation of this question; I mean, to his definition of the term.

term. "Genius," says Dr. Gerard, "is properly the faculty of Invention, by means of which a man is qualified for making new discoveries in science, or for producing original works of art." "The true Genius," says Dr. Johnson, "is a mind of great general powers, accidentally determined to some particular direction:" and elsewhere he styles Genius "that quality, without which judgment is cold, and knowledge is inert; that energy which collects, combines, amplifies, and animates; always investigating, always aspiring; in its widest searches, still longing to go forward, always imagining something greater than it knows, always endeavouring more than it can do." Of these two different accounts of Genius, I acknowledge that the latter appears to me to approach much nearest to the truth. I am of opinion that Dr. Gerard has totally mistaken the nature of Genius, when he affirms that Genius is "one of the intellectual powers, and conspicuously distinguishable from the rest." "Genius," says the Professor, "is confounded not only by the vulgar, but even sometimes by judicious writers, with mere capacity, which implies nothing beyond a little judgment, a tolerable memory, and considerable industry." But I know not any writer vulgar enough, or, rather, absurd enough, to confound Genius with mere capacity, as described by Dr. Gerard; that is, with the lowest, or, if not the lowest, with a very low degree of capacity; though

I acknowledge that I have met with very judicious writers, who regard Genius as differing from capacity, not in kind, but in degree; and this is evidently the idea of Dr. Johnson. When the capacity of any individual, *i. e.* his ability for acquiring, retaining, and digesting knowledge, arises to a certain degree of superiority above the common level, we stile him, without hesitation, a man of Genius, without any exclusive reference to the faculty of Invention. It is true, that vigour of Imagination almost invariably accompanying any remarkable superiority of capacity, it is justly considered as one of the principal ingredients which enter into the complex idea of Genius: but judgment, memory, understanding, enthusiasm, and sensibility, are also included; for a very high degree of capacity is as constantly found conjoined with these mental qualities, as with Imagination or Invention; and though the man of Genius may not possess all these properties in the same degree, and though the relations they bear to each other cannot be ascertained by any fixed rule of proportion, the total absence of any one of them will divest him of all pretensions to the praise of Genius. In vindication, however, of that erroneous hypothesis which reduces Genius to mere Invention, Dr. Gerard observes, “that if a man shews
“ Invention, no intellectual defects which his
“ performance may betray, can forfeit his claim
“ to Genius, and the degree of this faculty
“ ascribed to him, is always in proportion to
“ our

“our estimate of the novelty, the difficulty, or the
 “dignity of his inventions.” But this is evidently
 supposing a case which is never known to exist :
 the faculty of Invention is invariably accompanied
 with a certain degree of judgment, understanding,
 sensibility, and taste. If it could be supposed or
 proved to exist, entirely unconnected with these qua-
 lities, it most certainly would not entitle the possessor
 to the praise of Genius, but to the reproach of
 folly and extravagance. Dr. Gerard himself allows,
 in another part of his work, that “mere Imagina-
 “tion will not constitute Genius. As fancy,” he
 very justly observes, “has an indirect dependance
 “both on sense and memory, from which it re-
 “ceives the first elements of all its conceptions;
 “so, when it exerts itself in the way of Genius, it
 “has an immediate connection with judgment,
 “which must constantly correct and regulate its
 “suggestions.” But how does this coincide with
 his former assertion, that Genius is strictly and
 properly the faculty of Invention? Dr. Gerard
 seems to think, that he has sufficiently reconciled
 these apparent contradictions, by remarking, that
 “if fancy were left entirely to itself, it would run
 “into wild caprice and extravagance, unworthy
 “to be called *Invention*.” This is really curious.—
 Dr. Gerard will not allow us to call Invention
 Invention, because it does not happen to suit his
 hypothesis; but certainly, if Genius is nothing
 more nor less than Invention, the wildest caprices
 of fancy are indubitable marks of Genius. It is

true that the learned Professor shelters himself under the authority of Quintilian, who says, "Ego porro ne invenisse quidem credo eum, qui non judicavit; nec enim contraria, communia, stulta invenisse dicitur quisquam, sed non vitasse." But the true meaning of Quintilian is far from being favourable to the hypothesis of Dr. Gerard. The Romans had no term in their language exactly corresponding to the word *Genius*; but the idea was very familiar to them: and both Cicero and Quintilian plainly perceived that it was inadequately expressed by the term "*inventio*." "Quid illa vis," Tully asks, "quæ tandem est, quæ investigat occulta, quæ inventio, atque excogitatio dicitur?" By this energy of mind, which was called *Invention*, because *Invention* was one of its principal characteristics, they saw that something more than *Invention* was really intended; and the general idea of Quintilian respecting *Invention*, as expressive of *Genius*, did not, in fact, differ from that of Dr. Hartley, when he defines *Invention* to be "the art of producing new beauties in works of imagination, and new truths in matters of science." But new beauties and new truths cannot be discovered without the exercise of judgment, reason, memory, and taste; that is to say, *Genius* does not consist in the mere faculty of invention; and to say that it consists in the art of producing or discovering new truths or new beauties, is to make it consist in that assemblage of mental qualities,

fides, without the joint operation of which new truths and new beauties cannot be produced. Dr. Gerard tells us, that "the degree of Genius ascribed to a man, is always in proportion to our estimate of the novelty, difficulty, or dignity of his inventions." I do not well comprehend what is meant by "estimating Genius by the novelty of an invention." I thought all inventions had an equal claim to novelty, however dissimilar they might be deemed in other respects. The difficulty and dignity of an invention, if by dignity be meant its utility and beauty, are indeed circumstances which afford very sufficient proofs of Genius in the inventor; but then they are proofs of something more than a mere faculty of invention:—they show that invention is associated with its usual concomitants, judgment, penetration, taste, and feeling. The fact is, that Genius is a term, like many others, too complex to admit of a regular or precise definition; and if Genius is confounded by some writers with mere capacity, it is certainly much more excusable than to confound it with mere invention, which is only one of the intellectual powers; whereas true Genius pervades, strengthens, and illuminates the whole collective mass, and is so far from being confined to invention, that it is often very conspicuously displayed in the opposite and less dignified walk of imitation. Had the *Iliad* of Homer been as destitute of poetical fire as the burlesque, though literal translation of Hobbes, should we have scrupled to

file the beautiful translation of Pope a work of far superior Genius to the original, though the praise of invention would still have remained with the old Bard?

In a word, by capacity I mean an ability for acquiring knowledge. By Genius I mean an eminent and uncommon degree of capacity, including that assemblage or aggregate of mental qualities, usually associated with it. I mean, that energy of mind which is not only capable of receiving, but of exciting, vivid and powerful impressions. I include imagination, judgment, understanding, invention, and enthusiasm; and though I will not pretend to affirm that Genius cannot exist whenever a remarkable deficiency or disproportion appears in any of its component properties, yet I will venture to say, that Genius cannot exist where all these properties are not to be found in a certain degree. Imagination is unquestionably one of the noblest of the mental powers; and when the inventive faculty produces what has truth and beauty as well as novelty to recommend it, without doubt it must be acknowledged an infallible criterion of Genius; but still it has no exclusive right to assume to itself the appellation of Genius, which is a term of such comprehensive import, as to include within its jurisdiction all the rational and intellectual powers. There is, in fact, no one intellectual quality, which, if it arises to a certain height of excellence, may not be considered as a characteristic of Genius; for there is such an intimate connection
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between the different mental powers, that if any single quality rises to uncommon excellence, there is a very strong presumption that the other mental qualities, though perhaps in a great degree uncultivated or neglected, are also naturally excellent. That quick discernment of beauty, and ardent admiration of it, for instance, which we denominate *taste*, implies such a degree of intellectual vigour and excellence, that it may very properly be regarded as a characteristic of Genius; though, abstractedly considered, it has often and very justly been opposed to Invention, which is another and a higher mark of Genius, and which, therefore, has often been confounded with Genius. Thus Voltaire observes, that "Shakespeare has Genius, and Addison taste; between which, however," says he, "there is an immense interval." If by Genius we understand Invention, there is indeed a very wide interval between the power of creating, and that of merely discerning beauties; and the former is, no doubt, a much more striking and decisive evidence of Genius than the latter: but taste, though a weaker, may nevertheless be a proper and satisfactory evidence of Genius; and experience sufficiently proves, that exquisite delicacy of taste, or a ready and vigorous perception of beauty, is seldom found where invention, or the faculty of producing new beauties, or discovering new truths, is entirely wanting; and it cannot exist but in conjunction with judgment, understanding, and sensibility.

I shall now take the liberty to offer, as they occur, a few detached observations relative to the subject. And,

First, As to the long contested question relative to the disparity of Genius between the two sexes, which some writers who have themselves but very slender pretensions to Genius, have insisted upon with great apparent exultation, I must frankly acknowledge, that I regard the claim of MAN to superiority in this view, as wholly illiberal, and void of any just foundation. There are two modes of comparison, by which this question may be brought to a short issue. First, if we compare men and women, born in the lowest ranks of life, and equally destitute of the advantages of education, I believe it will be very generally allowed by such as have viewed them with most attention, that women of this class discover no inferiority of understanding to men of the same description. Or, secondly, if we compare women in the higher stations of life, whose minds have been properly cultivated, to men of the same rank, I believe the comparison will be equally to the honour of the female sex. And to institute any comparison, where the advantages of education are confined to one of the parties, would be too gross and manifest a partiality.

Though Lord Chesterfield, in order that nothing might be wanting to exhibit his son to the world as a consummate politician, informs him, as a profound secret, that women were in reality only children of a larger growth, and were to be regarded
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and treated as such; it is certain, that of those women, who have attained to the summit of power, a great proportion have shewn that their talents for government were equal to those of the greatest princes. I shall not, to justify my assertion, trace the records of history so far back as the reigns of Semiramis, Tomyris, or Zenobia; ladies of whom, I confess, I should be happy to obtain better information: but I appeal to modern times, to facts, and to characters known to all the world. I appeal to our own renowned Elizabeth, to the famous Isabella of Castile, to an Anne of Beaujeu, to a Christina of Sweden, and to a Catherine II. of Russia, that illustrious Princess, for whom, perhaps, the glorious task is destined, of expelling those proud contemners of female understanding, the Turkish Barbarians, from those delightful countries, which have so long groaned under the yoke of Ottoman despotism.

Secondly, it may be observed that no learning, no experience, no application, will either conceal or compensate an original deficiency of Genius. Poverty of Genius in reality becomes only the more conspicuous by an artificial conjunction with extensive knowledge, or profound learning; and in public life, if men of mean talents, tho' of long experience and of accurate acquaintance with the detail of business, are ever so unfortunate as to be elevated to the highest departments of the State, there is perpetual danger, lest for want of comprehension of mind and perspicacity of discernment,

measures

measures should be adopted injurious or perhaps fatal to the interests of the community. Of the truth of this observation, Archbishop Laud, in the last century, and George Grenville and Lord North, in modern times, are egregious examples. No man of penetration would have ventured to attempt so odious an innovation, and fraught with such dangerous consequences, as the American Stamp-Act; and still less would a great Statesman have adopted that wretched plan of policy which counteracted the beneficial effects of its own concessions, by retaining and enforcing a paltry duty as a mark of Sovereignty, when compelled to relinquish that hope of revenue for which alone it was ever worth while to advance the claim.

Defect of Genius is indeed the grand characteristic of the twelve years administration of that unfortunate Nobleman. From men of Genius only, though they will always be feared and hated by envious and little minds, can we ever rationally expect any seasonable, judicious, and well-conducted plans of improvement; the danger is, as ambition is generally the ruling passion of such men, that they will be more solicitous to extend and perpetuate their own authority, than to promote the glory, the interest and prosperity of the community. In a well regulated monarchy, however, this danger is much less imminent than under a republican, and particularly a democratic form of government.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, It ought to humble the pride of Genius to consider, that it is liable to fall into the greatest speculative absurdities. Genius, joined with extensive power, and a beneficent disposition, can indeed scarcely fail to secure the happiness, the esteem, and the affection of mankind. Rectitude of conduct in public life, depends much more upon a quick and almost intuitive discernment of propriety, than upon long and complex trains of reasoning; but in the closet, the man of Genius appears in a great measure to lose his pre-eminence.

Human nature is so unequal to the investigation of truth, that a mind of the highest powers, which ventures to confide in its own superiority, is quickly lost in a labyrinth of perplexity and error.

Truth is to be attained, as far as it is attainable by so weak and imperfect a being as man, by patient, laborious, and attentive consideration; by divesting ourselves of passion and prejudice, by commencing our enquiries with doubt and diffidence, and by extending a candid and equal regard to the arguments on every side, and weighing them in the balance of strict and impartial justice. The man of Genius is frequently deficient in almost all these essential requisites for the discovery of moral truth. Full of ardour and enthusiasm, and elate with the consciousness of superior talents, he thinks it superfluous to devote that portion of time and patience to the investigation

gation of truth, which its nature indispensably requires. He forms his opinions with precipitation, and, when once formed, his pride is engaged to vindicate and support them. As his feelings are strong, and the faculty of association vigorous and powerful, his first opinions, originally formed on very slight grounds, soon degenerate into inveterate prejudices; and in this state of mind he treats with contempt or indignation all arguments, but such as have a tendency to confirm him in error; and his superiority of Genius only serves, by supplying him with endless fallacies, to plunge him deeper and deeper into the abysses of absurdity and extravagance. This is a point long ago determined by a judge, whose knowledge of human nature I suppose no one will venture to call in question.

None are so surely caught when they are catch'd,
As wit turn'd fool; folly, in wisdom hatch'd,
Hath wisdom's warrant, and the help of school,
And wit's own grace, to grace a learned fool.

Love's Labour Lost.

I have always, however, thought a man of Genius, entangled in absurdity, an object of compassion, rather than of ridicule. To exult over an antagonist of this description, is to triumph in the weakness of human nature. "On doit," says the Marq. de Mirabeau, very generously, "une indulgence presque illimitée aux grands hommes quand ils ont évidemment tort."

Fourthly.

Fourthly, It is a prevailing opinion, and I think it is an opinion founded on fact, that melancholy is a very frequent attendant on Genius. How is this to be accounted for? Enthusiasm, or ardour of mind, is certainly a striking characteristic of Genius: but this is a quality apparently incompatible with melancholy, which deprives the mind of every degree of force and vigour, and leaves it without any proper stimulus to action. The difficulty may perhaps be solved, by supposing that enthusiasm is natural to Genius, and melancholy only an accidental and adventitious quality. None are so liable to disappointments in the world as men of Genius, and melancholy is the natural consequence of disappointment—Their feelings, too refined for their own happiness, are wounded by neglect; sometimes, perhaps, by insult. Their taste for beauty and order, is shocked by the scenes of folly, vice, and misery, perpetually presented to their view; the common concerns of life appear to them flat, insipid, and uninteresting. They first grow weary of the world, and then of themselves. The best remedy for this disease of the mind is religion; I mean that religion which is founded on reason and on truth, and which inspires a firm belief in the existence of an infinitely powerful, wise, and beneficent Being; and a full persuasion, that the present system of things is, in all its parts, consistent with the natural and moral perfections of its divine Author; and that the course of events is tending to a happy and glorious consummation. This religion,

religion, sublimed by faith, and invigorated by hope, exacts from us, first, the deepest reverence and gratitude to God, and next, unbounded love and benevolence to mankind. It informs us, that the great object of life ought to be the advancement of human happiness—A truly noble and animating principle of action in itself; but how much more so, when we have ground to believe, that no effort directed to this end shall be finally lost. No effort wholly lost, perhaps, with respect to others; and as to ourselves, we have a divine assurance, that even a cup of cold water, given in the true spirit of Christian benevolence, shall not fail to meet with its reward.

ESSAY XXII

REMARKS ON POPE'S ESSAY ON MAN.

VARIOUS and discordant have been the opinions of critics and commentators, respecting this celebrated performance. That it possesses a distinguished share of poetic excellence, none, however, I think, have yet ventured to deny. Voltaire goes so far as to affirm, that to this Essay Pope is indebted for that pre-eminence which he ascribes to him, when compared with his illustrious predecessor, Dryden: but that Pope is actually entitled to this claim of superiority, is at least very problematical; and, if it was allowed, I should imagine that the Rape of the Lock, the Epistle of Eloise, the Eclogue of the Messiah, and some other pieces that might be mentioned, would generally be considered as affording a better foundation for this claim to rest upon, than the Essay on Man; in which Poetry holds a subordinate place, and in which it is merely employed, though with the happiest success, to embellish and illustrate the most abstruse lessons of philosophy. Dryden, indeed, has, in his Hind and Panther, given us a striking

striking proof of the ease and spirit with which he was able to conduct a chain of reasoning in verse: his transitions are less abrupt, his expression less obscure, and his air and manner more free and unconstrained, than those of Pope. On the other hand, in dignity of style, in sublimity of sentiment, and in beauty and variety of poetical ornament, Pope has incomparably the advantage. In reading the Essay on Man, we are tempted to exclaim, with the rapture of the youth in *Comus*,

“How charming is divine philosophy!
Not harsh and rugged, as dull fools suppose;
But musical as is Apollo's lute,
And a perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets.”

It is not my purpose, however, at present, to expatiate upon the poetical merits of this piece, but rather to enter into a critical, though concise, examination of its philosophical principles. It is well known, that the general plan of this Essay was originally framed by Lord Bolingbroke; and it is universally believed, that Pope was ignorant of the ultimate, and, indeed, the obvious, tendency of his own arguments; and when he found that his principles were considered as subversive of religion, he eagerly embraced the assistance of Warburton, who undertook the Herculean task of rescuing them from that imputation. But, most undoubtedly, that system of philosophy which professes to justify the ways of God to man, without having recourse to the doctrine of a future state, must

must ever be considered as in the highest degree inimical to religion; whose very nature and essence it is, to direct our views beyond the narrow limits of the present scene of existence. This is a point too evident to receive confirmation from any medium of proof. I propose, therefore, to examine, not the utility, but the *consistency*, of these philosophical principles; to ascertain the value, and weigh the force of those arguments, upon which this system of naturalism is founded, and from which the Poet pretends to deduce this ultimate conclusion, that,

In spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
One truth is clear—whatever is, is right.

It is amusing to observe the very different opinions entertained of this celebrated Essay, in this point of view, by writers of considerable abilities and knowledge; and who might reasonably be supposed well qualified to form a judgment of its real merits. Dr. Johnson, who is certainly a critic of the highest order, in his Life of Pope, thus delivers his sentiments upon the subject: “This Essay
“affords an egregious instance of the predominance of genius, the dazzling splendor of imagery, and the seductive powers of eloquence.
“Never were penury of knowledge, and vulgarity
“of sentiment, so happily disguised. The reader
“feels his mind full, though he learns nothing;
“and when he meets it in its new array, no longer
“knows the talk of his mother and his nurse.

D d

“Metaphysical

“ Metaphysical morality was, to Pope, a new study; he was proud of his acquisitions, and supposing himself master of great secrets, was in haste to teach what he had not learned.” On the other hand, Dr. Warton, a writer of acknowledged taste and discernment, affirms, that “ The Essay on Man is as close a piece of argument, admitting its principles, as perhaps can be found in verse. It is hardly to be imagined how much sense, how much thinking, how much observation, on human life, is condensed together in a small compass.”

Perhaps these opposite sentiments may be, in some degree, reconciled, by supposing that the arguments of the Poet are, in themselves, weak and futile, but that they are urged and illustrated with ability and address. All the sagacity and penetration of Bolingbroke, adorned with all the art and elegance of Pope, and enforced by all the power of words, cannot transform darkness into light, falshood into truth, or absurdity into sense.

“ Admitting its principles,” says Dr. Warton, “ the Essay on Man is as close a piece of argument as can be found in verse.” There is a sense, undoubtedly, in which this mode of expression conveys a just and definite idea; if we mean by it that the author advances erroneous postulata, but deduces just and legitimate conclusions from those false principles, we may very properly say, that, admitting his principles, his argument is just: but this cannot

not

not be Dr. Warton's meaning; for the grand postulatam advanced by Pope, that God is a Being possessed of infinite perfections, is certainly a just principle; but he fails in his attempt to prove that the natural and moral phænomena of the universe are consonant to the perfections of the divine nature: so that I must confess I do not understand the propriety, or even the meaning, of this concession.—Allow his reasonings to be just, and then, without doubt, it must be allowed that he reasons well: but suppose another critic, less complaisant than Dr. Warton, should object to his mode of induction; then, I presume, it may justly be affirmed that he reasons ill. In a word, if Dr. Warton means to compliment this Essay, as possessing an high degree of argumentative merit, I fear he is betrayed into this false judgment by the Poet's splendor of eloquence, and pomp of declamation: if, on the other hand, he means that the reasonings of the Essay are weak and inconclusive, but that the Poet has advantageously exhibited, and artfully embellished them, then his general idea of its merit coincides with that of Dr. Johnson; and nothing can be objected to this decision, but its want of perspicuity; for at present we are apparently led to conclude, that, in Dr. Warton's opinion, the Essay on Man is, and it is not, a good piece of argument.

Mr. Pope, in this famous Essay, has undertaken the mighty task of vindicating the ways of God to Man, in compliance, as Lord Bolingbroke himself informs us, with the express wish of his noble

friend. If we consider the very dangerous tendency of the system of philosophy here inculcated, it may well be suspected that the original design, on the part of Bolingbroke, was a deep and insidious one—Not that Pope has adopted the opinions of Bolingbroke in their full extent: he had too just a sense of the importance of religion, and too much regard for the welfare of society, not to reject them, when openly proposed, with indignation—But they came to him disguised in so pleasing a form, that it cannot be thought very wonderful that a man, who had little accustomed himself to metaphysical disquisitions, should be allured and deceived by so fair and specious a semblance. The object of Bolingbroke was, doubtless, to explode the commonly received opinions relative to a future state. There are two very different modes by which this may be attempted. The first, which is Bolingbroke's own method, is to insinuate, not only that the physical arguments, usually alledged in proof of the soul's immortality, are wholly inconclusive, but that the moral arguments, deduced from the consideration of the moral attributes of the Deity, are equally destitute of solidity; because those attributes are themselves destitute of satisfactory proof. The other method, which is that suggested by his Lordship to Pope, is to receive, as a fundamental principle, and as the basis of farther investigation, the truth of the divine attributes, natural and moral, and to affirm that the plan of Providence, actually exhibited to our view, so far as it is capable of being comprehended by
us,

us, is, in all respects, consonant to the perfections of the Divine Nature; and if so, we can have no more reason to conclude that the present life is connected with a future state, than on that more daring hypothesis, which absolutely denies the existence of those perfections. To the first mode of reasoning, which is, without doubt, of a nature much more subtle and perplexing than the latter, it may be answered, in a few words, that though a complete demonstration of the infinity of the divine goodness is not to be attained, yet it is manifest, that good preponderates in the universe in a very great degree, and that the farther we carry our researches, the more numerous, and the more striking, are the proofs we discover of benevolence, as well as of wisdom and power. It is, therefore, fair to conclude, that beings of more exalted capacity would form proportionably higher conceptions of the moral, as well as natural attributes of the Supreme Being; and that, as we have reason to believe his power and wisdom to be infinite, not being able to conceive more illustrious displays of those attributes, than the works of creation and providence actually present to our view; so it is highly reasonable to suppose, that the attribute of benevolence, if it exist at all, must exist in a manner analogous to the rest; *i. e.* we ought to suppose it to be infinite: but if, contrary to all the principles of analogy and good sense, we should admit a limitation of the principle of benevolence in the Divine Mind, for which no one can pretend

to assign any adequate, or even any possible cause, yet a degree of wisdom, power, and benevolence, far short of infinite, would lead us to expect, in some future period, another and a better state of things, in which the disorders and irregularities, so conspicuous at present, and so inconsistent with the wisdom and goodness discoverable in the general constitution of the universe, may be redressed or rectified, and the ways of GOD to Man be finally and completely vindicated.

Let us now proceed to consider the second supposition, or the hypothesis actually embraced by Mr. Pope; according to which, the belief of a future state must be dismissed from our creed, as entirely superfluous; the general plan of Providence admitting, as it seems, of a complete vindication, independant of any visionary or superstitious notions of this kind.

Say first, of GOD above, or Man below,
 What can we reason, but from what we know?
 Of Man, what see we but his station here,
 From which to reason, or to which refer?
 Thro' worlds unnumber'd tho' the GOD be known,
 'Tis ours to trace him only in our own.
 He, who through vast immensity can pierce,
 See worlds on worlds compose one universe,
 Observe how system into system runs,
 What other planets circle other suns,
 What vary'd being peoples ev'ry star,
 May tell why Heav'n has made us as we are, &c.

We

We cannot but feel some emotions of surprize, after the lofty language of the exordium, to see the Poet so soon abandon his grand design; and, instead of *offering a vindication of Providence*, content himself with affirming, that a being endowed with powers far surpassing human capacity, might possibly be able to succeed in this arduous undertaking. For a vindication he now thinks it expedient to substitute an apology.

Presumptuous Man! the reason would'st thou find,
Why form'd so weak, so little, and so blind?
First, if thou canst, the harder reason guess,
Why form'd no weaker, blinder, and no less, &c.

Undoubtedly it is the height of presumption and impiety to arraign the wisdom and goodness of Divine Providence, in the formation of such a creature as man; for, supposing a certain degree of happiness imparted to a created and dependent being, how can that being have a right to claim, from its creator and benefactor, a degree of happiness superior to that actually conferred? The absurdity and extravagance of the claim are self-evident: but the question to be solved is, whether, granting the existence of such an imperfect being, it is most conformable to our ideas of infinite wisdom and goodness, to suppose that after a few revolutions of the sun, he is to sink again into annihilation? or, as he is formed with a capacity or unlimited improvement in moral and intellec-

tual excellence, that the present life is only preparatory to another state of existence, in which he may have ample scope to fulfill all the wise and beneficent purposes of his creation? Certainly, if we are at liberty to argue upon the hypothesis of a supreme superintending intelligence, infinite in all perfections, the latter supposition must be, according to our ideas of wisdom and goodness, far more honourable to the divine government, and therefore more consistent, and more probable, than the former; but conclusions of this nature, Mr. Pope does not attempt to draw; he satisfies himself with saying, coldly,

Respecting Man, whatever wrong we call,
May, must be right, as relative to all.

This, indeed, inevitably results from the absolute perfection of the divine nature; but then it is a much more satisfactory mode of reasoning, according to common apprehension, to say, that God is infinitely wise and good; and, therefore, we have reason to hope for a renovation of our existence, because it seems necessary to the completion of a plan of perfect wisdom and benevolence, than to argue as Mr. Pope indirectly does, that although the Deity is possessed of infinite perfections, both natural and moral, we cannot thence infer the probability of a future state of existence, because, however inexplicable or inconsistent with that infinity of perfection the present scene of things, independently

independently considered, may appear to our bounded comprehension, it may, nay, must be right, considered as a part of the universal system. It must, indeed, be acknowledged that, admitting the moral as well as natural perfections of the Deity to be infinite, we cannot absolutely demonstrate the reality of a future state, because our ignorance and inadequacy of comprehension, render it impossible for us positively to pronounce the total annihilation of the human race to be incompatible with even infinite wisdom and goodness; but surely it is incompatible with such ideas of infinite wisdom and goodness as the imperfection of human knowledge will suffer us to attain; and therefore the dictates of natural reason direct us to a contrary conclusion; for, as Mr. Pope himself well observes——“What can we reason but from what we know.”

Hope humbly then; with trembling pinions soar;
Wait the great teacher, Death; and God adore.
What future bliss, he gives not thee to know,
But gives that Hope to be thy blessing now.
Hope springs eternal in the human breast;
Man never is, but always to be blest:
The soul, uneasy, and confin'd from home,
Rests and expatiates in a life to come.

In this passage Mr. Pope has, indeed, thought proper, very inconsistently with the general tenor of his reasoning, to refer us to a future state for a solution of all our doubts and difficulties. Those difficulties,

difficulties, viewed in the proper light, form indeed, of themselves, a strong presumption of a future state, from their apparent incongruity with the general plan of Providence; but Mr. Pope represents them as in no respect inconsistent with or derogatory to the natural or moral attributes of the Divinity, and as sufficiently accounted for by our inability to comprehend the perfect order established by the great directing mind, thus superseding the necessity of recurring to the obsolete solution of a future state, which is an impertinent and idle presumption, if the present transitory scenes can be reconciled without any such expedient to our ideas of the divine wisdom, justice, and goodness; and throughout the whole Essay, Mr. Pope derives, from this great principle, no assistance in his attempts to vindicate the rectitude of the divine government. By a very easy and compendious process, the Poet first takes it for granted, that the perfections of the Deity are infinite; and then takes it for granted, that the natural and moral phenomena of the universe *must* be consonant to those perfections.

If plagues or earthquakes break not Heav'n's design,
 Why then a Borgia, or a Catiline?
 Who knows but he, whose hand the light'ning forms,
 Who heaves old Ocean, and who wings the storms;
 Pours fierce Ambition in a Caesar's mind,
 Or turns young Ammon loose to scourge mankind?

These

These are noble and animated lines; the argument of which they form a part, divested of poetical expression and ornament, stands thus—Objections are raised against the general order of Providence, from the consideration of the prevalence of moral evil; but if we admit that the existence of natural evil is consistent, the existence of moral evil cannot be inconsistent with the absolute perfection of the divine nature, for the same general solution will serve for both. God acts by general laws, and partial evil will necessarily result from the operation of those laws, but partial evil is universal good; and moral, as well as natural evil, may, by almighty power, be made subservient to the most salutary and beneficent purposes. It cannot be denied that the Poet so far reasons right, as his reasoning tends to prove that the existence of natural and the existence of moral evil, are difficulties of the same nature and magnitude; and whatever will serve for a solution of the one, will undoubtedly suffice for the solution of the other: but the grand difficulty still remains unsolved by the Poet, “Whence comes either?” In answer to this perplexing enquiry we are only assured, that

— the first Almighty Cause

Acts not by partial, but by gen’ral laws.

If the speculatist asks, “What makes all physical or moral ill?” The Poet immediately replies, “There deviates nature, and here wanders will.” “Pope,”
says

says Dr. Warton, " here accounts for the introduction of moral evil, from the abuse of Man's free will. This is the solid and scriptural solution of that grand and difficult question which, in vain, hath puzzled and bewildered the speculators of so many ages, *ποθεν το κακον*." It is evident, however, that neither the Poet nor Critic were actuated by the spirit of that celebrated antient, who, as it is said, being informed, when a child, that the heavens and earth rose out of chaos, first discovered his genius for philosophic investigation by asking, " And chaos whence?" Why is nature suffered to deviate, or the will to wander? If the great end be general happiness, and God be possessed of infinite power and wisdom, we have a right to expect the accomplishment of that end, by such means as are adapted to produce this effect, in the highest possible degree; and to affirm, that it is consistent with infinite wisdom to sacrifice happiness to a particular order of nature, or to a pretended freedom of agency, is to suppose it consistent with infinite wisdom to sacrifice the end to the means, or that which alone possesses intrinsic value, to that which is valuable only as the means of attaining it; for nothing is really valuable but as it tends to produce happiness. If, indeed, it could be demonstrated, that partial evil is universal good, or that the general happiness is ultimately promoted by a mixture of evil, it would certainly amount to a complete vindication of the divine government; and this we know
to

to be actually the case, in very numerous and striking instances daily offering themselves to our attention; but, however imperfect this solution may be deemed, if we confine our observations to the present scene, upon the supposition of a future state, the prospect, "to reason's eye," "clears up apace," and we are able, through the mists of ignorance and prejudice, to discern, that purposes highly worthy of the Omnipotent Creator, are answered by the introduction of evil, natural and moral, into the universe; and let no one dare to indulge himself in the practice of immorality and vice, under the vain pretext that the vices and imperfections of men are comprehended in the order of the universe; for it is equally true, and it can never be too deeply impressed upon the mind, that the punishment of vice is also an essential part of this divine and perfect order*.

Vast chain of being! which from God began,
Natures æthereal, human, angel, man,
Beast, bird, fish, insect, what no eye can see,
No glass can reach; from Infinite to thee,
From thee to Nothing.—On superior powers
Were we to press, inferior might on ours;
Or in the full creation leave a void,
Where, one step broken, the great scale's destroyed.

* Vide Hume's Essays, Vol. I. p. 151.

On reading the entire passage from whence I have transcribed these beautiful lines, I wonder not that Pope should have chosen to treat this abstruse subject in a poetical form; for it must be confessed, that in humble prose this argument would make but a very indifferent figure. To pretend to vindicate Providence in the formation of so imperfect a being as Man, by asserting, in direct terms, that if we had been advanced to an higher rank in the scale of creation, universal confusion and anarchy must have ensued, and the system of which we constitute a part, must, like the baseless fabric of a vision, have instantly dissolved, could only have excited the derision of the atheistical objector; and when he adds that

The least confusion, but in one, not all
That system only, but the whole must fall.
Let earth unbalanc'd from her orbit fly,
Planets and stars run lawless through the sky:
Let ruling Angels from their seats be hurl'd,
Being on being wreck'd, and world on world:
Heav'n's whole foundations to their centre nod,
And Nature tremble to the throne of God.
All this dread order break—for whom? for thee?
Vile worm!—Oh madness! pride! impiety!—

he deviates into the wildest philosophical rant, though it is animated and ennobled by the highest poetical enthusiasm.

Cease then, nor Order Imperfection name;
Our proper bliss depends on what we blame.—

Safe

Safe in the hand of one disposing Pow'r,
Or in the natal, or the mortal hour.
All Nature is but Art, unknown to thee;
All Chance, Direction, which thou can'st not see;
All Discord, Harmony, not understood;
All partial Evil, universal Good:
And, spite of Pride, in erring Reason's spite,
One truth is clear, "Whatever is, is right."

I am happy at last to acquiesce in the same general conclusion with Mr. Pope, though I cannot but think that he has deduced this grand truth from very weak and inadequate premises. It were an easy, but invidious task, to expose in a much greater variety of examples, the pernicious and dangerous tendency of the general arguments offered in this famous Essay, for the laudable purpose of vindicating the honour and rectitude of God's moral government. Mr. Pope, as a moral philosopher, is justly blameable for excluding that great principle of religion from his general system, upon which the highest stress ought ever to be laid; and, without which, there is no essential or practical difference between Deism and Atheism.—I mean the doctrine of a future state. At the same time I must do him the justice to acknowledge, that his Poem abounds with striking and elevated reflections, admirably calculated to excite a spirit of rational and philosophical devotion; and I entertain so favourable an opinion of his general character as to believe, with a firm assurance, that

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that if he had really conceived this Essay to be injurious to the cause of religion and virtue, he would have disdained to court any increase of poetical fame by its publication; and, as on a former occasion, with a noble indignation, would have exclaimed——

Oh teach me, Heaven! to scorn the guilty bays;
Drive from my breast such wretched lust of praise:
Unblemish'd let me live, or die unknown;
Oh! grant an honest fame, or grant me none.

ESSAY XXII.

REFLECTIONS *on the GENIUS and SPIRIT of*
CHRISTIANITY.

NO one who is actuated by a sincere regard for truth, or love of virtue, can consider Christianity as an uninteresting subject of speculation or enquiry. The evidence upon which this religion rests I have already stated, and the objections to which it is liable I have endeavoured to obviate. I now propose to make a few general remarks upon the Genius and Spirit of this religion, with respect to which it differs most essentially from all other religions which have ever appeared in the world. I shall instance in the following particulars—its philanthropy, its simplicity, and its rationality.

First, It breathes a spirit of ardent, of universal, of unlimited benevolence. This spirit is, indeed, not so properly a part, or a distinguishing feature of Christianity, as the sum and substance of it. To this great end, the sacred writings, both apostolical and evangelical, evidently tend; and upon this plain and express command, “Thou shalt love the Lord

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“ thy

“ thy God with all thy soul, and thy neighbour
“ as thyself,” depend both the law and the prophets. In short, Christianity alone, of all religions, has for its object the happiness, present and future, of all mankind. So intimately blended is this spirit of benevolence, with the spirit of Christianity, and so impracticable is it to eradicate from the mind the idea of this union, that, in the darkest ages of Popery, when Christendom was sunk in the lowest abysses of ignorance and error, when the demon of fanaticism seemed to preside over the affairs of men, and the most malignant and diabolical passions were consecrated to the service of religion, and were supposed most effectually to recommend mankind to the divine favour, the ultimate advancement of human happiness was still the avowed motive of those actions, which were, in fact, most directly subversive of that end. When the horrid notion was universally prevalent, that everlasting misery must be the inevitable lot of those who were not within the pale of the Catholic Church, it is no wonder that the most inhuman barbarities should be practised, even by men of tempers naturally mild and gentle, in order to enforce the profession of that system of faith, which promised, and which could alone ensure, future and eternal felicity. If the divine favour be inseparably connected with the belief of certain speculative opinions, and not with the practise of certain moral and religious duties, it is doubtless a proof of the highest regard for the true interests of our fellow-creatures, to take every possible

possible method of diffusing the knowledge and belief of those tenets, and of deterring, by wholesome severities, any attempts to innovate upon that system, an entire and implicit acquiescence in which is pronounced, by infallible authority, to be the sole means of attaining to happiness in a future state. All virtue is founded on the basis of utility; if, then, the torture, or even the destruction of the body, be necessary to the salvation of the soul, this discipline, though sharp and rigorous, is just and laudable; and the rack, the stake, and the wheel, are all converted into the benign instruments of Christian compassion. If these are genuine deductions, with what horror should we regard the principle from which they flow! I mean, that faith, unconnected with right temper and conduct, can, in the remotest degree, tend to render us acceptable in the sight of God. It is, indeed, true, and the Romish church has, in a manner peculiarly striking, demonstrated this truth, that faith, or right sentiments, have a strict and inseparable connection with virtue, or right conduct; but still it must be acknowledged, that faith is no farther valuable, than as it guides us to the love and practise of virtue; and that, to limit the divine favour to the belief of any set of speculative principles, is to subvert the foundation of morality, and to counteract the obvious design of the Christian revelation. Happily, the great end and object of that revelation begins to be better understood, and more generally acknowledged; and we shall, at last, perhaps,

become sensible, that our own ultimate happiness is to be attained only by promoting, as far as our sphere of action and influence extends, the happiness of others; and that the general happiness is most effectually promoted, by diffusing a spirit of universal charity, of mutual forbearance, and of humble piety.

But, Secondly, Another remarkable characteristic of Christianity, is its simplicity. To the utter confusion of systems and system-makers, and astonishing as the fact confessedly is, the great Founder of our religion left no records, or written memorials, respecting the end and object of his mission, for the information of posterity. He lived a life of the most unexampled piety and devotion, of the most ardent and disinterested benevolence; he wrought numerous miracles in proof of the authenticity of his mission; he died upon the cross, agreeably to his own prediction, and rose again the third day, triumphantly from the grave, and ascended into heaven, from whence he will come again at the final dissolution of the world, in the fulness of divine power, to raise the dead to life, and to render to every man according to his works. Of these awful and momentous truths we are assured by evidence, the validity of which cannot be questioned, without adopting principles utterly subversive of the credit of all human testimony; and they contain the sum and substance of the Christian revelation. It was not, however, till a considerable interval of time had elapsed after the death,

death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, that any regular and authentic accounts were published of the principal events of his life, and tenets of his doctrine; and even then, not by any previous and express commission from him, but in order to gratify the anxious and laudable desire of the numerous proselytes to this new religion, it appears that the evangelical histories were at length compiled. We have, indeed, other writings of apostolical authority, which, invaluable as they may justly be deemed, are, however, the Apocalypse excepted, all likewise of an occasional nature, written at different times, to different societies of Christians, upon different emergencies. Nothing, therefore, but the prophecies contained in those writings, together with a few passages, professedly penned from immediate inspiration, appear to be, strictly speaking, of divine authority. The epistles comprized in the scriptural canon, breathe, indeed, a truly christian and evangelical spirit; they are, in every respect, worthy of the great and venerable characters to whom they are ascribed; but the writers certainly do not arrogate to themselves that plenary degree of inspiration, they do not exact that blind and implicit acquiescence in their opinions, which is at present generally conceived essential to the exercise of apostolical authority. The Christian religion subsisted long before St. Paul wrote his celebrated epistles; and it is doing Christianity mighty wrong, to deduce from those epistles an abstruse system of speculative theology, and to

pronounce that system essential to Christianity. It is plain, that in a variety of respects, the apostles differed in opinion amongst themselves. Are we to attempt the preposterous task of reconciling discordant and contradictory opinions, because each opinion, separately, may plead the sanction of apostolical authority? For my own part, if it were proper, in such a case, to range under the banners of any party, I should be tempted to exclaim, "I am of Paul." This great apostle, not only in the disputed questions relative to circumcision, meat offered to idols, &c. but in his general views, and in every part of his conduct, discovers a liberality and comprehension of mind, to which the other apostles appear comparatively strangers. His style is, indeed, harsh, abrupt, vehement, and highly rhetorical; but, with a proper allowance for the oriental magnificence of diction, which so remarkably distinguishes the writings of this accomplished scholar of Gamaliel, even those passages which appear most hard to be understood, respecting the dignity of Christ's nature, and the value of that sacrifice which he offered upon the cross, are perfectly reconcileable with the more plain and simple representations of the evangelical historians.

But, Thirdly, Closely connected with the simplicity of the Christian religion, is its rationality. What, indeed, can be imagined more agreeable to reason, than the grand and leading articles of the Christian faith?—That there exists one supreme God, infinite in all perfections, the fountain of
being

being and of happiness; that the whole series of events, consequently, is under the guidance of unerring Rectitude and Wisdom; that the present life is intended as a state of trial and probation; and that mankind, by progressive improvements in moral excellence, may render themselves capable of participating in the refined and spiritual pleasures of a future state; that Christ was delegated from heaven, to ascertain and to publish this grand fact, respecting a connection between the present and a future state of existence, and that he will appear a second time, to judge the world in righteousness. Are these doctrines hard to be understood, or hard to be believed? They are not, indeed, truths which unassisted reason could ever demonstrate; therefore some persons who are the avowed enemies, and, strange as it may seem, others, who are the avowed friends of Christianity, have not scrupled to assert, that the doctrines of revelation are contrary to reason, or, in other words, that they are irrational and absurd: this charge, or this concession, is, however, founded on a gross and palpable sophism. If, for a moment, we could suppose, that a Newton had never existed, and that the true system of the universe had been discovered by supernatural illumination, would that system have been deemed irrational, because human reason would, in that case, have been unequal to the discovery of the truths demonstrated by that illustrious philosopher? Though plausible, and, as it now appears, well-founded, conjectures

were formed, respecting the moral attributes, and moral government of the Deity, in the one case, and respecting the true system of the universe, in the other, we could never have attained to moral certainty, as to the former, or to mathematical demonstration, as to the latter, without the aid of supernatural illumination, or of such a stupendous superiority of genius, as fell scarcely short of it. But are these discoveries, therefore, to be branded as irrational? Surely the disgrace of irrationality can belong only to those who are daring enough to advance, or weak enough to admit, so impudent and groundless an accusation. The truth is, that the doctrines of Christianity were always agreeable to reason; *i. e.* to abstract truth and rectitude, and were always, probably, known to be so, by beings of a higher rank in the scale of creation than man. Nevertheless, before they were actually revealed, there was a sense in which it might, without impropriety, be said, that they were not agreeable to reason; *i. e.* to human reason; because, in that state of fluctuation and uncertainty which subsisted previous to the incarnation of the Messiah, notwithstanding some appearances to the contrary, the weight of evidence appeared, upon the whole, to preponderate in favour of that gloomy hypothesis, which pronounced death to be the total and final extinction of being. An elegant writer, whose religious opinions seem to be as extraordinary as his sentiments respecting government, upon which I have elsewhere taken the liberty to animadvert, has, however,

ever, thought proper to censure, without reserve, and in a very high tone, those pretended Christians, as he pleases to stile them, who have the presumption to assert, and even, as he might have added, the assurance to demonstrate, the reasonableness of Christianity.—“ To prove the reasonableness of a revelation, is, in fact, to destroy it,” says this champion of revelation. If this is admitted, it must be owned, that the credit of revelation is, indeed, in a very critical and alarming state; for, upon this ground, the only mode of proving it credible, is to prove it to be unreasonable; and, I presume, arguing *a fortiori*, the more unreasonable the more credible, till at last we shall happily arrive at that famous conclusion, which Mr. J——s doubtless will allow to be of itself a ground of assent, amounting to intuitive certainty.—“ Credo quia impossibile est.” But as the Essay, in which the subject of rational Christianity is discussed by Mr. J——s, is extremely curious, I shall take the liberty of selecting from it a few passages for the amusement of the reader. He commences this entertaining disquisition by complaining, that “ several learned and ingenious
“ writers have undertaken the arduous task of re-
“ velation and reason; for which purpose they
“ have, as he affirms, with inconsiderate rashness,
“ expunged every divine declaration which agrees
“ not exactly with their own notions of truth and
“ rectitude; and this they have attempted by no
“ other means, than by absurd explanations, or
by

“ by bold assertions that they are not there; as
“ some philosophers have ventured to deny the
“ existence of matter, for no other reason than
“ because they find in it properties which they are
“ unable to account for.” To what particular
writers Mr. J—— alludes in this paragraph, I
will not venture to form any conjecture; but who-
ever they may be, I must beg leave to observe in
their favour, that they seem, “ with caution bold;”
because, when they begin with expunging these
obnoxious passages, they may, doubtless, very
safely, as well as boldly, assert, that they are not
there: but the very existence of these passages is
denied, it seems, upon the same principle on which
some philosophers have denied the existence of
matter, “ because they find in it properties which
they are unable to account for.” Now this is a
reason which I will venture to affirm, no philoso-
pher or theologist ever thought of offering in his
own vindication; and the discovery of it, therefore,
must exhibit the uncommon sagacity of Mr.
J—— in a most striking point of view. Those
philosophers who call in question the existence of
matter, think themselves able to account for its
physical properties, or for the actual phenomena
of nature in another mode, which they deem more
satisfactory, and less perplexing, than the com-
monly received hypothesis; and those divines also,
who have the presumption to explain a controverted
passage in a sense different from the sense of
Mr.

Mr. J——, “ find in it properties,” which they imagine themselves better able to account for by adopting a rational, than an irrational interpretation; though Mr. J—— may still enjoy the satisfaction of thinking, that the irrational sense bids fairest for being the true sense of the passage. “ Thus,” continues Mr. J——, “ they have reduced Christianity to a mere system of ethics, and retain no part of it but the moral, which is in fact no characteristic part of it at all; as this, though in a manner less perfect, makes a part of every religion which has ever appeared in the world.” That morality makes a part of every religion which has ever appeared in the world, is true; but then, the rational Christian deems, with higher reverence than Mr. J—— seems to do, of the difference between Pagan and Christian morality: but the principal stress is by the Rationalist placed on considerations, which do not appear even to have occurred to Mr. J——; I mean, on those awful sanctions by which that pure and perfect system of morality is guarded—sanctions resulting from the nature and attributes of the Deity, and that fundamental, or, to use the expression of Mr. J——, that *characteristic* part of Christianity, the doctrine of a future resurrection.

“ During the last century,” as Mr. J—— informs us, “ the fashionable philosophers were, for the most part, Atheists, who ascribed every thing to chance, fate, or necessity, exclusive of all intelligence and design. These mighty giants, who fought
“ against

“ against heaven, being at length overthrown by
“ the absurdity of their own principles, and the
“ superior abilities of their adversaries, retreated,
“ about the beginning of the present, to the more
“ tenable fort of Deism; but here again, being
“ frequently worsted, they at last took shelter un-
“ der the covert-way of rational Christianity, where
“ they now make their stand, and attack revela-
“ tion with less odium and more success, than from
“ the open plains of professed Deism.” This whole
paragraph is penned with such felicity of diction,
that one cannot, without some degree of reluctance,
remark, that elegance of composition is its only
merit; for it so happens, that the fashionable phi-
losophers of the last century were, for the most
part, not Atheists, but Deists. It is well known,
in particular, that Lord Herbert of Cherbury, the
celebrated Harrington, Sir William Temple, Mr.
Blount, Mr. Hobbes, and Mr. Toland, were pro-
fessed Deists; and the insinuation that, as Atheism
gradually subsided into Deism, so Deism is at last
absorbed in a pretended conversion to rational
Christianity, is equally unfortunate; for open and
avowed Deism is certainly at least as prevalent now,
as at any former period: and it is surely as bad a
compliment to Christianity itself, as to some of its
most learned and respectable advocates, to suppose,
as Mr. J—— evidently does, that all the attempts
of those able writers to defend and to demonstrate
the reasonableness of it, are to be regarded as so
many positive proofs that they are not in earnest.

It

It was formerly allowed to be no contemptible joke, to maintain with a face of gravity, that "Christianity is *not* founded on argument;" but Mr. J—— is now desirous, for the honour of Christianity, to turn the tables upon the author of that famous assertion; and in future, it seems, it is to be considered as a mere exercise of pleasantry to maintain, that Christianity *is* founded on argument. "So adverse, however," Mr. J——informs us, "is Christianity to all the principles of human reason, that if brought before her tribunal, it must inevitably be condemned by so incompetent a judge. If we give no credit to its divine authority, any attempt to reconcile them is useless; and if we believe it, presumptuous in the highest degree. A revelation implies information of something which reason cannot discover, and therefore must be something different from its deductions, or it would be no revelation." That any attempt to reconcile reason and revelation, while we deny the divine authority of the latter, must be superfluous, is indeed self-evident; but that such an attempt, in those who acknowledge the authority of revelation, is the highest presumption, is an assertion which I should have expected only from a Papist, pleading in defence of transubstantiation: and it is a most contemptible quibble, to pretend that the doctrines of revelation must necessarily be contrary to the dictates of reason, merely because they contain truths which reason could not discover. The deductions

ductions of reason must be founded on such evidence as we possess.—“What can we reason but “from what we know?” But there are truths of the highest importance, for which mankind, previous to the promulgation of Christianity, did not possess satisfactory evidence—clear and satisfactory proof, however, is now obtained; therefore it may justly be affirmed, that propositions, which two thousand years ago might be pronounced contrary, are now perfectly consonant, to the conclusions of reason. Nor is there, surely, so much of mystery in this, as to puzzle any man of common sense. It is plain, that in the former case, contrariety to reason can only mean contrariety to the light of reason; or, in other words, divinely excellent as the doctrines of the gospel are, we were not sufficiently warranted, by the unassisted light of reason, to believe them to be *true*: but subsequent evidence having ascertained the truth of these doctrines, they may now be pronounced, in both senses of the expression, consonant to reason; for they are not only agreeable to the law of reason, *i. e.* to abstract truth, wisdom, and rectitude, but to the light of reason, which, by the aid of additional evidence, is happily enabled to discern that to be conformable to abstract truth, which unassisted reason could only express an unavailing wish, an almost hopeless desire, to find so. “But,” says Mr. J——, “the writers of the New Testament frequently declare, that the religion which “they teach is a mystery. What, then, is this “mystery?

“mystery? Not the moral precepts of the gospel;
“for they are no more a mystery than the Ethics
“of Aristotle, or the offices of Cicero: the my-
“stery consists alone in these very doctrines which
“the Rationalist explodes, because they disagree
“with the conclusions of his reason; that is, be-
“cause they are mysteries, as they are avowed to
“be by those who taught them.” It is true that
the Christian revelation is frequently stiled a my-
stery in the apostolical writings, and with great
propriety, because it contains doctrines which
could never be discovered by the light of reason;
but it is never affirmed, or intimated, that those
doctrines, when revealed, still continue to be my-
steries. The contrary is strongly implied in the
very passage quoted by Mr. J——, in support of
his assertion: “Having made known to us,”
says St. Paul, “the mystery of his will;” when the
divine will was made known, it is evident it could
no longer be deemed a mystery. So the same apostle
speaks of “the mystery which was hid from ages and
“generations, but which is now made manifest;”
which mystery he declares to be “Christ in us,
“the hope of glory.” Mr. J——, however,
in his great zeal to establish faith on the ruins of
reason, labours to prove, though, happily, with
very ill success, that there is a real contrariety
between them. “For instance, reason tells us,
“that a Creator, infinitely powerful and good,
“could never permit any evil, natural or moral,
“to have a place in his works; because his
“goodness

“goodness must induce him, and his power en-
 “able him to exclude them. Again, reason
 “assures us that sufferings, though they may be
 “just punishments for past crimes, and a means
 “to prevent them for the future, can never be
 “compensations for them; much less can the suf-
 “ferings of one being atone for the guilt of an-
 “other.” As to the first instance, I deny that
 reason ever made any such false declaration, as
 that a Creator, infinitely powerful and good, could
 never permit the existence of evil natural or moral.
 Whatever may be the degree of happiness imparted
 to finite beings, it must necessarily be finite; and a
 system in which a mixture of evil is combined
 with a predominance of happiness, is just as easily
 reconcileable to infinite power and goodness, as a
 system of pure and unmixed happiness inferior in
 kind or degree: and reason affords many argu-
 ments which render it highly probable, that happi-
 ness is upon the whole most effectually promoted
 by the introduction of evil into the universe: so
 that reason and faith are by no means at variance,
 as Mr. J—— pretends, with respect to this
 point. And as to his second instance, though I
 readily allow that reason assures us, the sufferings
 of one being can never be compensations for the
 crimes of another, I cannot admit any opposition
 between reason and revelation in this case; because
 I cannot find a single declaration in scripture which
 affirms the contrary. Reason and revelation con-
 cur, indeed, in asserting that the sufferings of one
 being

being may be the means of procuring or of communicating happiness to others; and the sufferings and death of Christ afford a signal and stupendous instance of this remarkable truth—a truth, confirmed by unvarying testimony and universal experience.

“Of all men who are called Christians,” says Mr. J—, “the Rationalist seems to have least pretence to that denomination; he is no less adverse to the Spirit than to the letter of this religion. The true Christian is humble, teachable, and diffident; the Rationalist is assuming, obstinate, and self-sufficient.” If these are the genuine characteristics of the Rationalist, Mr. J— would certainly have shown more discretion, had he been less lavish of his censures; for he may very easily chance to be mistaken for a Rationalist himself, after all the pains he has taken to escape the imputation of rationality. Mr. J— concludes with the following declaration: “I blame no one for want of faith, but for want of sincerity; not for being no Christian, but for pretending to be one, without believing. The professed Deist gives Christianity fair play; if she cannot defend herself, let her fall; but the rational Christian assassinate her in the dark: the first attacks Christ, as did the multitude, with swords and staves; the latter, like Judas, betrays him with a kiss.” Want of sincerity,

is indeed a very weighty and serious accusation; it is not only blameable, but highly criminal; and without the strongest evidence, should not be imputed to any man. But upon what grounds does Mr. J—— charge that class of Christians with insincerity, whose boast and happiness it is to believe the religion of Christ to be a reasonable service? and some of whom have given proofs of their sincerity, little short of laying down their lives for the sake of it. Who is this, then, that dares to usurp the prerogative of GOD; and assumes, unauthorized, and unqualified, the office of judge and searcher of hearts?—Rash and inconsiderate mortal! Know'st thou not that thou must thyself stand at the same awful bar with those whom thou hast thus vilified, arraigned, and condemned? and when impleaded at that high tribunal, who shall tell thy audit? Want of candour and charity, is, in my apprehension, a crime of no less magnitude than want of sincerity; and he who scruples not to brand such men as a Jebb, a Lindsey, or a Priestley, with insincerity, because their ideas of Christianity differ widely from his own, may be assured that he has imbibed but little of that divine Spirit of Christian benevolence; without which, though he speak with the tongue of men and of angels, though he understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, though he have faith so that he could remove mountains, though he bestow all his
goods

goods to feed the poor, and even though he devote his body to the flames, to gain the glorious crown of martyrdom, he has lived in vain, and all these splendid distinctions will profit him nothing.

ESSAY XXIII.

On the AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE.

THERE are some truths which all mankind agree to regard as first principles; the clearness and certainty of them are such as preclude even the possibility of a doubt; and all attempts, therefore, to establish or confirm them by argument, are not only superfluous, but absurd and ridiculous; and we laugh, without scruple, at the Philosopher who gravely exclaims, "Cogito ergo sum." There are other truths of great magnitude and importance, which cannot indeed properly be stiled self-evident; for they are capable of being opposed, and of being supported by argument; but the arguments, on the one side, are so obvious and convincing, and on the other, so weak and futile, that candour itself cannot, without difficulty, believe the most ignorant and prejudiced of mankind incapable of discerning the disparity. The question relating to the African Slave Trade, considered either in a civil or a moral view, may be adduced as an instance exactly

exactly in point. It is so flagrant and enormous a violation of the most sacred and fundamental laws of justice and humanity, it so evidently sets at defiance all those obligations which result from the nature of civil society, and the unalterable principles of equitable and legitimate government, that one cannot, without astonishment and indignation, view the necessity of entering into a regular discussion of the question, and of formally exhibiting a train of arguments, in order to prove this horrible traffic to be the height of moral and political depravity. The famous Abbé Terrai, Comptroller of the Finances in France, during the latter part of the reign of Lewis XV. on being informed that a certain iniquitous measure, proposed by him, was universally condemned as highly oppressive and unjust, replied coolly, "Who pretends that it is just?" This may be stiled the magnanimity of villainy. That abandoned Minister at least was not guilty of the crime of lowering the standard of moral rectitude, and of endeavouring to debase the sentiments of mankind to a level with his own practice: but the advocates for the Slave Trade do not rest satisfied with practical villainy; they are ambitious of distinguishing themselves by a speculative attachment to it. Rather than renounce an hypothesis which they are interested to maintain, they would reverse the general order of the universe, and the constitution of nature. They would fain persuade us, that virtue may subsist, though it is not nourished with

the milk of human kindness; and that vice does not consist in cruelty, rapine, treachery, and violence. It is not my present purpose to enter expressly into the consideration of those arguments, which demonstrate the contrariety of this practice to the first and plainest principles of moral and political rectitude. They have been repeatedly urged, with irresistible force, by writers of distinguished merit, in various recent publications. I mean to offer only a few remarks on the pleas which are usually advanced in defence or extenuation of this outrage against the common rights of humanity.

First, It is alledged, that "the Negroes are an inferior and subordinate race of men; and it is, therefore, allowable to treat them as such, without incurring the imputation of cruelty and injustice." What! to borrow the language of Shylock, "Hath not a Negroe eyes, hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same Winter and Summer that a Christian is?" Say, ye profound Philosophers, ye enlightened Sages, who inhabit the shores of Mersey and of Avon, by what medium of proof have you discovered and ascertained the intellectual inferiority of this devoted race? Will you venture to affirm, that the inhabitants of Africa are, at present, in a state of greater inferiority, compared with
you,

you, their high and mighty lords; you who hold so conspicuous and so honourable a rank amongst rational and intelligent beings, than your ancestors, the Ancient Britons, compared with the Romans of the Augustan age? But supposing this to be the case, their inferiority only gives them an additional claim to your indulgence and protection. That the power implies the right of oppression, is a discovery in political morality worthy of such sagacious and profound investigators of the natural rights of mankind, as the Lockes, the Blackstones, and the Montesquieus; trading to the coast of Guinea.

Secondly, The Slave Trade, *mirabile dictu*, is gravely vindicated on the principles of humanity, as being highly beneficial to those who are apparently the victims of it; for they are affirmed to be principally composed of prisoners of war, who would, in all probability, be slaughtered in cold blood, if their enemies were deprived of this more advantageous mode of disposing of them. What! is it then the voice of humanity that we hear pleading in defence of a practice, the very idea of which must excite, in every breast susceptible of the feelings of humanity, amazement and horror! View yon vessel, with sails expanded, ploughing the deep.—Contemplate for a moment the scene which it exhibits.—Within that receptacle of human misery, are contained hundreds of beings, possessing passions and feelings congenial to thine own.—Behold them bereft of every enjoy-

ment which can render life a blessing ; exposed to every outrage which can render existence a curse.

Dire is the tossing, deep the groans ! Despair,
Sending the sick, busiest from couch to couch ;
And over them triumphant Death his dart
Shakes, but delays to strike, tho' oft invoc'd
With vows ; as their chief good and final hope.

Is this the scene which humanity delights to view, or is it a scene at which she recoils and stands aghast ? Let not then that sacred name be profaned, and wrested to purposes abhorrent from its nature. — No ; it is hypocrisy which assumes the garb of humanity, and “ which hides “ the dagger underneath the gown.” If a more specific answer to this insidious plea be required, let these pretended advocates for humanity be told that the wars, which croud their ships with Slaves, have chiefly originated, and will for ever be perpetuated, by the prospect of advantage, which the sale of the prisoners affords. Let them be told, that amongst the most savage and barbarous nations, the practice of indiscriminate slaughter in cold blood never habitually obtained. But, at all events, if the personal happiness or benefit of the Slave is, indeed, the primary object of the Slave Merchant, certainly those philanthropists who engage in this traffic, from such noble and generous motives, must consider the previous consent of the Slave as absolutely necessary to give validity to the purchase :

purchase: if, therefore, he quits his native country voluntarily, what occasion for whips, and racks, and chains, to enforce obedience and submission? But it is an insult to common sense to pursue this argument farther. To devote to misery and ruin, hecatombs of guiltless human victims, for the pretended purpose of preventing some possible evil, or of obtaining some possible good, is, in a being so limited in his comprehension as man, a mode of conduct proceeding from the most impious presumption, or frantic folly.

Thirdly, Another argument, of nearly the same complexion with the former, is this, that though the forcible seizure of the Negroes is an act of injustice, yet the injury done them is really slight, as they enjoy a degree of happiness in their state of bondage, little, if at all, inferior to that which they possessed in their native country. Haughty and unfeeling tyrant! whose heart has long been callous to all the sensibilities which distinguish and which ennoble humanity; in vain would the miserable beings, subject to thy dominion, complain to thee of the pangs they felt when, with reverted eyes, they cast the last long lingering look upon their native shores! Engrossed by one fatal passion, the rage of accumulating wealth, how canst thou sympathize with the emotions excited by the various relations of social and domestic life? “by all the charities of father, son, and brother?”—Untaught to weep with those that weep, thy mind possesses no congenial feelings

feelings with those whose miseries have, in thy estimation, degraded them almost below the condition of humanity. Regarding them as belonging to the brutal, rather than the intelligent creation, perhaps, in the excess of your goodness, you permit them such accommodations as nature, thus deplorably degraded, may require. You hear, indeed, the noise of the lash resounding in your ears, accompanied with the groans and shrieks of the wretched sufferers; but this disturbs not your repose; for you too well know the utility, nay, what you stile the necessity of employing it; and the hidden anguish of the heart, the complicated woe which bids defiance to the power of language, the silent agony which pervades and overwhelms every faculty of the soul, escape your notice, or are thought unworthy of your attention: they are pronounced to be the effects of obstinacy, of fullness, of malice, or revenge; and the whip must be applied in order to enforce some degree of corporeal exertion; and by inflicting excruciating torture on the body, some relief, perhaps, is unintentionally afforded to the more dreadful torture of the mind. If, however, this is only rhetorical exaggeration; if it is indeed true, that a state of slavery is a state of happiness; if those who are originally reduced to this state by violence, become easily and speedily reconciled to it, let the Colonial Legislatures, merely for the satisfaction of the world, and for the complete refutation of those accusations which so deeply affect

affect their public character and conduct, enact a law, that every Negroe, who declares himself dissatisfied with his situation, shall not only be immediately emancipated, but conveyed back to his native country, at the public charge. This is bringing the matter to a fair issue; and, if none, or if only a small proportion of those to whom this offer is made, think it deserving of their acceptance, then, and not till then, will I acknowledge the native of Africa to be a being of a different and subordinate species to the man who presumes, to call himself his owner; then, and not till then, will I acknowledge that those principles which we regard as the basis of the common rights of humanity, are, as to him, wholly inapplicable, and entirely void of any just foundation.

Fourthly, It is farther alledged, in vindication of this detestable commerce, that, however great the sufferings of the wretched Africans may be, they are fully compensated by the inestimable advantage of possessing, though in a state of slavery, the means of instruction in the principles of the true religion. From ignorant heathens they have an opportunity of becoming enlightened Christians; and slavery itself is said to be a state which Christianity pronounces neither unlawful nor inexpedient. This argument I regard as an impious and cruel mockery. It is to add the highest insult to the highest injury. Allowing this fable of conversion to be a fact, can it change the nature of those acts of savage violence for which this pretended

tended conversion is to atone? But the fact notoriously is, that the planters are almost universally averse to the conversion of their slaves. In consequence of the laudable and unremitted efforts of a few exalted characters, some proselytes have indeed been made; and great must be their astonishment, when they attained to a competent knowledge of Christianity, to find the practice of Christians so opposite to its dictates. Openly and avowedly to violate all sanctions, human and divine, for the purpose of converting heathens into Christians, would be carrying fanaticism to the highest pitch of religious frenzy; and to pretend to act with that view, when we are wholly influenced by self-interested motives, is the vilest and most detestable species of hypocrisy. It is possible that heathens, in such a case, may eventually become Christians; but those Christians, who practice such methods of conversion, are themselves in a state infinitely worse than heathenism. As to the plea, that Christianity does not condemn slavery as unlawful, it can never be seriously urged, but by those who are strangers to the genius and spirit of Christianity. The sublime object which that religion has in view, is the happiness, present and future, of the whole human race: but it is to be remarked, that Christianity only inculcates general principles, and leaves the application of them to our own understandings, which are indeed, when properly cultivated, fully adequate to that purpose. Benevolence is the grand,

grand, the characteristic virtue of a Christian; but there are a thousand different modes of bringing that virtue into action, which are not distinctly specified in the sacred writings. We find, indeed, admirable directions for our conduct in a great variety of respects; but then those directions resulted from the occasional application of those general principles to particular cases, according to the discretion of the several writers. There is no proper limitation of benevolence, as an active principle, but the impracticability of its farther extension; and if we, who so justly and highly venerate the characters and writings of the apostles, should however be enabled, by means of that superiority of light and knowledge which, in some respects, we undoubtedly enjoy, to apply this grand principle to cases which did not occur to them, we act in a manner perfectly conformable to the genius and spirit of Christianity, though the authority of a positive precept may be wanting. St. Paul, probably, had no idea of a state of civil society, in which the spirit of liberty would operate to the total annihilation of the very condition of slavery. He contented himself, therefore, with giving directions worthy of an apostle, for the religious conduct of masters and servants, under actually existing circumstances; but enlightened Christians in the present age, well know that slavery may be, and in many Christian countries has, in fact, been totally abolished, not only with safety, but with real advantage to society.

society, and a great increase of the general happiness: they, therefore, justly condemn the state itself as inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity, though in peculiar circumstances private Christians may, perhaps, justifiably acquiesce in a state of things which it is not in the power of individuals to alter. But the evils attending the Slave Trade are of a nature very different, and of a far greater magnitude than those which necessarily result from the mere condition of slavery. In no state of society can a practice, involving in its circumstances of such atrocious and enormous guilt, be considered as defensible by any person whose understanding is not darkened by the turpitude of his heart; in whom not only the feelings of the moral sense are extinguished, but, in this instance at least, every ray even of common sense.

Fifthly, The Slave Trade is defended on the ground of political necessity. Many affect to commiserate the unhappy condition of the *poor Negroes*, and to lament the continuance of a practice, which they allow to be founded on manifest injustice; but, however exceptionable the Slave Trade may be, in a moral view, the political necessity of the case, say they, renders it impossible to effect any essential alterations in a system now established by the prescription of ages. The plantations in the West Indies can be cultivated only by Negroes; the climate is fatal to all but African constitutions, and the labour such as that

that hardy race of men only can support; but any regulations, for the purpose of preventing actual or possible abuses, they profess themselves anxious to adopt and to enforce. This is the language of those who wish much to be virtuous, but more to be rich; of those who honour humanity with their lips, but whose hearts are strangers to its divine influence. The political inconveniencies which may result from the abolition of the Slave Trade, may indeed be plausibly urged, as a motive for acting with proper caution and deliberation, as an argument against a precipitate annihilation of a commerce, which has been so long practised that its immediate and total suppression might possibly be productive of greater evil than the continuance of it, for a limited time, under certain restrictions: but seriously to maintain that the most sacred moral obligations ought to be superseded by mere political considerations, is an assertion the extravagance of which renders every attempt at confutation superfluous. I shall, therefore, content myself with observing, that the dangers to be apprehended from the abolition of this infamous traffic are not, by any means, so great as these interested politicians seem to imagine. Numerous and well-authenticated facts incontrovertibly demonstrate that, with mild and indulgent treatment, the present number of Slaves in the West-India Islands, might not only be preserved from diminution, but would admit of considerable increase; that there is reason to believe, that even
a gradual

a gradual emancipation of the Slaves would be attended with much benefit to the planter; that the Quakers have actually made the experiment with success; and that universal experience proves the soil of every country to be most advantageously improved and cultivated by the voluntary labours of the native inhabitants; and could we even suppose the possibility of such a dreadful calamity as the eventual rise of Muscovado sugars a few shillings in the hundred weight, in consequence of the additional expence of culture, it is plain that neither the proprietor, the planter, or the merchant, have any just ground of alarm, for the loss must necessarily fall upon the public, who, to their great honour, seem perfectly well disposed to sustain, with fortitude, whatever inconvenience may be incurred in consequence of the annihilation of a branch of commerce now become the object of public execration. As to any regulations which may be proposed, in order to effect a reformation of the abuses attending this commerce, it is obvious to reply, that the trade itself is an abuse, the most enormous of all abuses, the most atrocious of all crimes. To enact a law, therefore, for regulating, *i. e.* for establishing the Slave Trade, and for preventing the abuses attending it, would be an absurdity in morals and in legislation, as monstrous as to pass an act, authorizing theft, murder, and adultery, adding at the same time, certain provisions to obviate the abuses that might possibly attend the habitual commission of

of

of those practices. This is a case which disdains all offers of concession, all attempts at amicable accommodation. In fact, what object of importance could be gained by any system of commercial regulation which the warmest advocates of these devoted victims could devise? Would they not still be infamously robbed of all that can soothe and compensate the cares and sorrows of life? Would they not still be doomed to suffer, in a foreign land, all that the rage and malice of the petty despots, whose property they become, may prompt them to inflict? "The world is not their friend, nor the world's law;" nor, indeed, is it possible that any law should be effectual for the protection of those who are utterly destitute of the proper means of enforcing it.

Lastly, it is urged, that the abolition of this traffic would deprive of the means of subsistence, a numerous body of artizans and manufacturers, who are now employed in fabricating those articles of commerce which are exported to Africa, for the purchase of the Slaves annually imported into the Colonies. In our attempts to relieve one species of distress, we should undoubtedly endeavour to guard, as much as possible, against the creation of another; and of this argument I allow the weight, as tending to evince the *impolicy* of an immediate and unconditional abolition of the Slave Trade; and it is in vain to expect that, upon the principles of natural justice alone, this question will be decided. If, however,

a plan was framed, and it would not, surely, be very difficult to devise a plan, for the gradual extinction of this horrid commerce, the super-numerary artizans and manufacturers at home, would have leisure and opportunity to apply themselves by degrees to other kinds of employment; and, if a wise and liberal system of policy was embraced, I doubt not but a trade to the Coast of Africa, far more extensive and beneficial than the present, might be established, on a much more solid and permanent foundation. But these are speculations into which I forbear to enter. Upon the whole, however, we may with confidence affirm, that regulations for the purpose of obviating the political inconveniencies which might result from the abolition of the Slave Trade, would do honour to the most enlightened Legislature; but a feeble attempt to satisfy the demands of honour and conscience, by any pretended regulations, for the mere purpose of preventing or of rectifying the abuses of that trade, which is itself the most flagrant of all abuses which the annals of the world exhibit, would disgrace the understandings, and detract from the dignity, even of a Convention of Hottentots.

ESSAY XXIV.

On the NATIONAL DEBT.

AT the æra of the Revolution no National Debt existed; *i. e.* no Debt borrowed on parliamentary security, for discharging the interest of which national taxes were imposed and mortgaged. It is one of the most astonishing facts in all the records of history, that in the century which has elapsed since that memorable event, a Debt has been contracted by the Government of this country, which cannot be estimated at less than two hundred and fifty millions sterling; a sum so vast, that it probably exceeds the whole aggregate value of the precious metals actually in circulation throughout all the kingdoms of the globe. A political phenomenon so extraordinary, could not fail to excite the attention, and employ the sagacity, of the ablest statesmen and philosophers, closely connected as it is with considerations of the utmost importance to the welfare, and even the existence of the State. In opposition, however, to the most confident predictions, and, indeed, contrary to every apparently reason-

able ground of expectation, we find by experience, that the kingdom is not only capable of sustaining the pressure of this immense load, but that it exhibits plain indications of internal vigour, and even of increasing wealth and prosperity. That there is a point, however, beyond which the accumulation of the Public Debt must prove destructive and fatal, cannot be doubted; and to this general conviction we owe the late institution of a permanent fund for its gradual redemption.

It is well known, that in the year 1716 Sir Robert Walpole established a fund, distinguished by the appellation of the Sinking Fund, which was appropriated, under the authority of Parliament, to the sole purpose of redeeming the National Debt, at that time amounting to about fifty millions. This Fund was formed by the reduction of the legal rate of interest, from six to five *per cent.* aided by various surplusses, arising from the different duties and taxes imposed for the payment of the interests of particular loans. It is evident that a fund so constituted, if faithfully and invariably applied to its original destination, must be not only a fund continually increasing, but a fund increasing with a perpetually accelerated rapidity; for not only the interests of the sums annually discharged by the original fund were to be regularly added to it, but the interests of the sums discharged by those interests, and so on in progression, *ad infinitum*; or, in other words, the original fund was a fund continually improving.

proving at compound interest; and as the public Debt at that period bore an interest of five *per cent.* a very slight knowledge of figures will suffice to prove, that at the termination of a period of about fourteen years, the fund would be able to disengage annuities equal to its own amount. Estimating, therefore, the original fund at one million, at the end of fifty-six years it would be increased to no less than sixteen millions; that is to say, three hundred millions of Debt, bearing five *per cent.* interest would, at the expiration of this term, be totally extinguished. This is, indeed, amazing; but, as it admits of an easy demonstration, it cannot, at least it certainly ought not, to incur the reproach so often cast on the airy dreams of speculative politicians. The radical idea of this plan of redemption is, it must be owned, so obvious and simple, that it is very easily conceivable even the Minister who established it might not himself be fully sensible of its latent energies. When we consider, however, the great abilities of Sir Robert Walpole as a Financier, and his extensive political knowledge, as well as the very able and masterly manner in which the nature and powers of this fund were explained and defended by the ministerial advocates and writers of that time, it can scarcely be imagined that Sir Robert Walpole was himself the dupe of those despicable arguments, by which the House of Commons was induced by him to consent to the total alienation of the Sinking Fund,

Fund, in a very few years after its first establishment. The true motives which influenced the conduct of that Minister, therefore, it may be presumed, were the desire of avoiding the odium of imposing new taxes, in order to provide for current services during a time of profound peace, and a secret reluctance in the Court, to lessen the political influence and security which the reigning family was supposed, not without reason, to derive from the existence of a public Debt of such magnitude. For almost half a century after the practice of alienation commenced, the attempts made to restore the Sinking Fund to its original state, were few and feeble; and, at length, notwithstanding the prodigious increase of the National Debt; in consequence of the wars terminated by the treaties of Aix la Chapelle and Fontenoy, all ideas of its nature and efficacy appeared to be totally lost; and the whole nation, absorbed in contests as disgraceful to its reputation as injurious to its interests, possessed neither leisure nor inclination to direct its views to an object, in comparison of which the political controversies of the day appear egregiously trifling and ridiculous. At length, however, about the year 1772, a private clergyman, not of the establishment, once more awakened the attention of the reflecting and intelligent part of the community, by a most animated and masterly "Appeal to the Public on the Subject of the National Debt;" but though it was scarcely possible, by any exertion

exertion of human ability, to display the ruinous tendency of the measures actually pursued, or the advantages attending the restoration of the original plan of Sir Robert Walpole, in a more striking or convincing point of view, it did not immediately produce any very sensible effect. Every discussion relative to the management of the finances, was supposed, by the generality of persons, to be involved in darkness and mystery; and the noble Lord then at the helm of government, and in the zenith of his power and reputation, affected to consider the mathematical demonstrations of Dr. Price, as the ingenious but Utopian speculations of a visionary writer; and not a single advance was made by Lord North, in the whole course of an administration of near thirteen years, towards the re-establishment of the great and necessary plan of a permanent redemption. On the contrary, after the war with America commenced, the annual loans were invariably and avowedly negotiated on the dangerous and desperate principle, that redemption was wholly impracticable; and in conformity to this maxim, in order to effect a trifling saving in the article of interest, that Minister scrupled not to create an enormous addition of superfluous capital. In the year 1781, for instance, twelve millions were borrowed, for which the public paid precisely five and an half *per cent.* interest. Had a capital been created of twelve millions, at five *per cent.* and an annuity granted for a limited term, by way of premium, it is

evident, that whenever the Debt came into a regular course of redemption, no more would be paid by the public than was actually received; and that the high rate of interest would also greatly accelerate the progress of redemption: but the plan actually adopted by his Lordship, was to grant for every hundred pounds subscribed, one hundred and fifty pounds three *per cent.* and twenty-five pounds four *per cent.* capital stock; so that a new capital of twenty-one millions was created, when twelve millions only were actually paid into the Exchequer. Supposing the three *per cents.* therefore, in the course of redemption, to rise to par, and under the administration of Mr. Pelham they rose considerably above par, a premium of nine millions must be paid by the public for the loan of twelve. That a British Minister should be found rash and unadvised enough to propose so extravagant and monstrous a plan, or that a British House of Commons should be induced, by any arguments whatever, to give it the sanction of their approbation, must equally excite our astonishment and indignation. Happily for the nation, and, indeed, for the world in general, a change of administration soon succeeded, and after a short interval, Mr. Pitt was placed at the head of the finances; and I most willingly join in the general plaudit, which the integrity and ability displayed by him in the management of them have so justly excited. In the year 1786, he had the merit of forming a plan which

which soon passed into a law, for appropriating one million annually to the redemption of the Public Debt. The plan of Mr. Pitt, is, indeed, radically and essentially, the same with that first projected by Sir Robert Walpole, and revived by Dr. Price. In some important circumstances, however, it differs, and, I think, appears to much advantage in the comparison. In the first place, the money appropriated to the purpose of redemption, is regularly issued from the Exchequer, at stated times, and consigned to the management of Commissioners, who are obliged by law, upon the usual transfer days, to employ it in the purchase of stock, agreeably to certain rules of proportion established by the Act. Thus the House of Commons hath, as it were, erected a barrier against its own encroachments. The money once paid into the hands of the Commissioners, becomes a kind of sacred deposit; and though the Legislature may, doubtless, by a new Act, discontinue the payments from the Exchequer, or even compel the Commissioners to refund or alienate what has been already appropriated, yet this would be an effort of political violence, which could not fail to excite a very general alarm, and a very powerful opposition; and a Minister who would not scruple to propose an alienation of a sum, such as the public exigencies might happen to require, of which he had himself the custody, and which presented every moment the most tempting opportunities of seizure, would find himself in very different

different circumstances when the transfer had been actually made; and his purpose could not be effected, unless a fund, solemnly appropriated to a service of the highest importance, were openly and publicly plundered.

Another capital improvement of the original plan, consists in the power vested in the Commissioners to advance money, during war, by way of loan, on interest to the Government. This regulation, proposed by Mr. Fox, is attended with a double advantage—as it obviates the principal inducement to alienate the Sinking Fund, arising from an urgent necessity for a supply of money, during a season of public danger and distress; and as it must have a powerful tendency to restrain the rate of interest on public loans within moderate and reasonable bounds. Various other particulars, though of inferior importance, might be specified, in which the plan of Mr. Pitt may justly claim a degree of merit superior to that of his predecessor. Notwithstanding, however, the very general approbation with which it was received, a most vehement attack was immediately made upon it, from a quarter whence so rude an assault could scarcely have been apprehended. The present Earl Stanhope, a nobleman nearly allied to, and closely connected with, Mr. Pitt, on this occasion entered the lists against the Minister, armed “*cap a pie*,” defying him, “*a l’outrance*,” with the lowering brow and menacing air of a fierce and implacable combatant. Happily, being myself placed beyond the reach of the “whiff and
“wind”

"wind" of his Lordship's fell sword, I am the better enabled to observe and report the astonishing feats achieved by this noble champion. Raillery apart, it must be owned that his Lordship's first charge seems intended as a mere flourish, viz. That the Commissioners may, by means of the powers given them by this Bill, make large fortunes by gambling in the Public Funds. "As the Commissioners," argues Lord Stanhope "must certainly know in which of the Public Funds they mean to lay out the *free revenue*, they may previously employ secret and unsuspected Agents, to purchase as largely as they think proper into that stock, which will necessarily be raised by the consequent appropriation of the Public Money." But his Lordship seems not to recollect, that by this Bill the Commissioners are obliged to bring the Public Money to the Public Market in regular and equal portions; therefore no sudden rise can ever take place in any particular stock, in consequence of any vast or unexpected purchase; and as to the gradual rise which will doubtless be the necessary consequence of the gradual purchases of the Commissioners, it is evident, that if the whole produce of the Sinking Fund was applied to the redemption of any particular stock, the rise of every other stock would maintain an exact proportion to the rise of the stock so redeemed; as from obvious causes, the different Public Funds have always preserved, and must ever continue to preserve,

preserve, one common level. Dismissing this objection, therefore, as trifling and captious, let us proceed to the second, which we shall find more deserving of our attention, viz. That this plan does not propose any conversion of stock. "This plan," says his Lordship, "is so contrived, that an enormous and unnecessary expence will be incurred by the public, in the redemption of the present three *per cents.* which alone form a capital of one hundred and eighty-six millions."

Lord Stanhope here professedly grounds his reasonings upon the probability that the three *per cents.* will not be redeemed at an average lower than ninety. This, as a matter of probable conjecture, and as a sufficient basis of argument, where certainty is unattainable, may, I think, be fairly admitted; and, in this case, the advantage of a general conversion of the three *per cents.* into four *per cents.* is manifest. If a hundred millions of three *per cents.* redeemable at ninety, could be converted into seventy-five millions of four *per cents.* redeemable at par, it is evident, that the sum of fifteen millions would be saved to the public. This plan of conversion was first proposed by Dr. Price, to the present Marquis of Lansdowne, when Earl of Shelburne, and at the head of the Treasury. It obtained the approbation of that Nobleman, who meant, had he continued in office, to have combined it with the plan formed for raising the loan for the service of the year

year 1783. It is, however, liable to a very serious objection, viz. that the Stockholders will require so large a premium to induce them to convert, that the sum necessary to accomplish the conversion, might be applied with more effect to the purpose of immediate redemption. That this assertion, however, cannot rest on any absolute grounds of certainty, is evident; because, in order to ascertain the advantage resulting from such conversion, the average rate of redemption must be previously known. From a general inspection of the present transfer prices, it appears, that the sum of two millions five hundred thousand pounds, would be necessary to effect a conversion of one hundred millions of three *per cents.* into seventy-five millions of four *per cents.* Here then arises the question, whether it would be most beneficial to the public, to employ this sum in the redemption of stock, or in the conversion of it. An annual fund of one million, employed in the redemption of seventy-five millions of four *per cents.* would liquidate the whole Debt in thirty-six years; but the same annual fund, aided by the sum of two millions and an half, applied to the immediate purpose of redemption, in preference to conversion, in the space of thirty-six years would discharge only eighty-eight millions of three *per cents.* allowing ninety to be the average rate of redemption. A loss of twelve millions, therefore, would, at the end of that period, be sustained by the public, in consequence of applying the sum
of

of two millions and an half to the purpose of redemption, rather than of conversion. The truth, however, is, that it is not, in the remotest degree, probable the gross sum of two millions five hundred thousand pounds will ever be applied either in the one way or the other. But a practicable plan, doubtless, might be formed, by which a gradual progress might be made in the process of conversion; and as the principal cause of the comparative depreciation of the four *per cents.* is the apprehension of a reduction of interest, or a redemption at par, the value of the new four *per cents.* might be considerably raised, and consequently the expence attending the conversion considerably lessened, by enacting, that the new capital should neither be redeemable, nor the interest reducible, till the old four *per cents.* were previously and entirely liquidated. Lord Stanhope, indeed, proposes a plan, according to which a general conversion of stock would, as he pretends, take place, without subjecting the public to any extra expence. If so, the public are certainly under very great obligation to the noble Lord; but I apprehend that few words will suffice to expose the futility of his Lordship's pompous project. The inducement which Lord Stanhope holds out to the Proprietor of Stock, in lieu of a premium, to engage him to convert, is *the right of priority of redemption*, and the sinking fund is to be inviolably applied to the purpose of redeeming the new four *per cents.* at par, according to the order

order of time in which the conversion shall have been made. It is most certain, therefore, that as long as the three *per cents.* remain below seventy-five, the Stockholders, who have interest sufficient to procure early subscriptions, would need neither arguments nor menaces, lavish as his Lordship is of both, to induce them to convert. But it is, at the same time, just as certain, that a loss would be sustained by the public, exactly equivalent to the difference between the actual transfer price of the stock so converted, and the sum at which it is to be redeemed. But, if the three *per cents.* should rise above seventy-five, not all the eloquence of Demosthenes, or Cicero, would prevail upon a single Stockholder, obstinate and insensible as they are, to convert his three *per cents.* into four *per cents.* unless a *bonus* was secured to him equal, at least, to the difference between the market price and the price of redemption. A *bonus* the noble Lord himself allows to be, in these circumstances, indispensably necessary; and, as priority of redemption is the grand allurement held out by this plan, the *bonus* must of course correspond, or keep pace, with the advance of the original stock. If ninety, therefore, be, as his Lordship supposes, the average rate of redemption of the original stock, it follows, that a *bonus* of fifteen millions will be necessary, in order to procure a conversion of one hundred millions of three *per cents.* into seventy-five millions of four *per cents.* or, in other words, the conversion would be

be merely nominal, and the same sum would operate exactly in the same manner, if applied to the redemption of the three *per cents.* under their original denomination. His Lordship's project is, therefore, in part, absurd and extravagant, and, in part, nugatory and ridiculous.

The third objection urged by Lord Stanhope, against the plan established by Mr. Pitt, is, that no effectual means are provided to prevent an alienation of the fund from the purpose of redemption. Now I acknowledge, and I have already mentioned it as one of the advantages attending Mr. Pitt's plan, that the most effectual means are, in my apprehension, provided, which human wisdom can devise, to prevent any such alienation. If Lord Stanhope can point out any means more effectual, the public would certainly deem themselves still more indebted to him, than even for his incomparable scheme for the conversion of stock, free of all expence. The means actually proposed by his Lordship, are, however, totally inadequate to the purpose. It must be confessed, indeed, that so far as his Lordship's plan participates of the nature of a contract, it would not be considered by Parliament as alterable, but with the concurrence of all the parties concerned; and, it is evident, that so long as the three *per cents.* should continue below seventy-five, the consent of those Proprietors of the new four *per cents.* who were in expectation of a speedy redemption, could not be obtained. If any serious intention of alienation, there-

therefore, was entertained, a stop must previously be put to the process of conversion, which could never be anticipated to any great degree, but under circumstances of enormous disadvantage to the public. But, whenever the three *per cents.* rose above seventy-five, the process of conversion would cease of itself, unless the public voluntarily offered a *bonus*, as an inducement to convert, which might be continued or with-held at pleasure. It is plain, therefore, that the Sinking Fund could never be incapable of alienation for any considerable period of time; and for such time only as it was employed in operations of finance, peculiarly pernicious, extravagant and absurd. As Ministers of State are often severely censured without reason, it is both right and pleasing to commend, when their public conduct has been really meritorious; and I feel myself the more disposed to bestow that tribute of applause which Mr. Pitt, in the capacity of Minister of Finance, is so justly entitled to claim, as it appears highly probable that he is now at the eve of a resignation of his high offices*. I cannot, however, avoid remarking, that the learned and excellent man, who first awakened the attention of the nation to this interesting and important subject; the man, whose ideas Mr. Pitt appears chiefly to have adopted and acted upon; the man, who so ably and clearly explained the nature and powers of

* This Essay was written, and transmitted to the Printer, in the month of January last.

the Sinking Fund, and who so forcibly, and at length successfully, urged its re-establishment, has had no mark of public approbation or distinction conferred upon him, though titles, places and pensions, have been profusely lavished upon persons, respecting whose public services the public still remain most profoundly ignorant. It has, indeed, been disputed, whether patriotism is really a virtue: if it is not, at least it must be allowed to bear a very striking resemblance to it, in one respect, viz. that by a refinement of sentiment, so honourably characteristic of the present age, it seems to be universally considered as ITS OWN REWARD.



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